

SPECIAL SECTION: **BEST BUSHCRAFT KNIVES**

Knives Illustrated

Fiddleback
CAMP KNIFE
POWER & VERSATILITY



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The SXB, or Skullcrusher's X-treme Blade, was designed by EJ Snyder. He is an extreme survivalist, a decorated Army Combat Vet, and a 3 time Naked and Afraid participant. He had one major goal: build a tool to aid in surviving the toughest challenges the world has to offer. His life experiences ultimately led him to design such a knife. Every part of its design was carefully thought out from the tip to the Skullcrusher on the pommel. Whether on the battlefield or in the harshest terrain, this beast will get you through any tough situation.

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BY GARRETT LUCAS

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We have three words that should get your attention: customs, Sheepdog and affordability.

BY LES ROBERTSON



ON THE COVER

KNIFE: Fiddleback Forge Camp Knife

PHOTOGRAPHER: Terrill Hoffman

DESIGNER: Ronald Abella

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QUESTION & ANSWER

54 Rugged, Tough, Dependable

If you haven't met E.J. Snyder, you're missing one intense, rugged, tough and dynamic individual. You can say the same thing about his knife, the TOPS SXB.

BY DOUG JEFFREY

PICTORIAL

14 Precious Gems

If you woke up today feeling like you need a jump start, these six pages should do that and more. Wait until you see these magnificent customs.

PHOTOS BY JIM COOPER

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CARVIN' JACK COLLECTION™

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Closed Length: 4 ¼ inches
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Blade Lock: Liner
Weight: 2.2 oz
MSRP: \$39.95



Whittlin' Jack®

Specifications

Blade Steel: 1095 HC
Blade Length/ Type: 1 ½
 inch Detail Knife & 2 inch
 Roughing Knife
Closed Length: 4 ¼ inches
Handle Material: 6061
 Anodized aluminum,
 Walnut veneer inlay,
 Brass rivet fasteners
Weight: 3 oz
MSRP: \$52.95



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Specifications

Blade Steel: 1095 HC
Blade Length/ Type: 2 inch
 Roughing Knife, 1 ½ inch
 Detail Knife, 1 inch
 Mini-Cutting Knife
Closed Length: 4 ¼ inches
Handle Material: 6061
 Anodized aluminum,
 Cherry veneer inlay,
 Brass rivet fasteners
Blade Lock: Liner
Weight: 4 oz
MSRP: \$89.95



Pocket Jack®

Specifications

Blade Steel:
 1095 HC
Blade Length/ Type: 1 ½
 inch Detail Knife, Straight
 Gouge, Gouge Scorp,
 and V-Scorp
Closed Length: 4 ¼ inches
Handle Material: 6061
 Anodized aluminum,
 Brass rivet fasteners
Blade Lock: Clip
Weight: 3 oz
MSRP: \$86.95



Carvin' Jack®

Specifications

Blade Steel: 1095 HC
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 Straight Gouge, Gouge
 Scorp, V-Scorp, Hook Knife, and Chisel
Closed Length: 4 ¼ inches
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 aluminum, Bubinga veneer inlay,
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THE BOYS OF SUMMER

BY DOUG JEFFREY

THE score was 11-1. Baseball's Boston Red Sox had a commanding lead over the Detroit Tigers, and 22-year-old Eduardo Rodriguez was on the hill for the Sox.

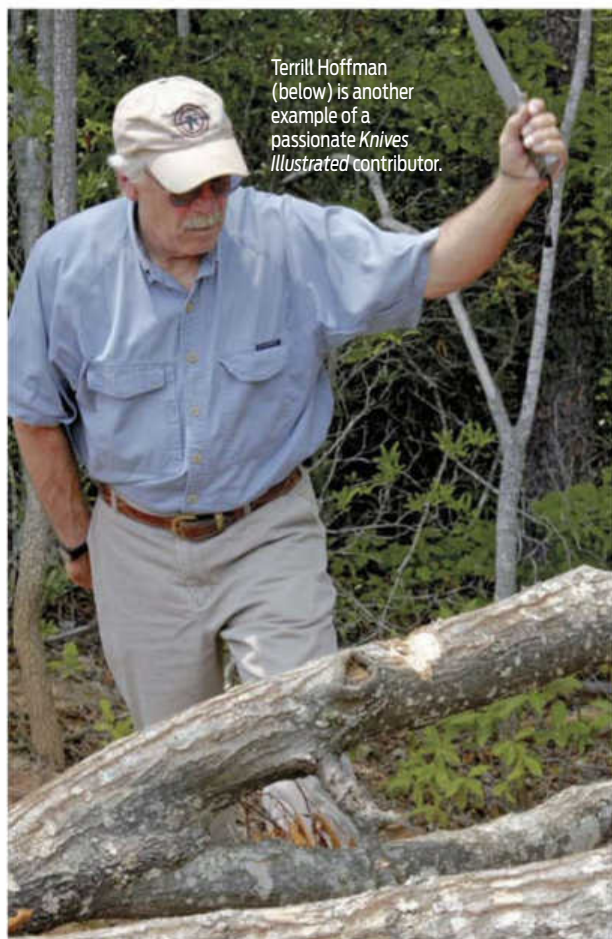
The kid from Venezuela has a ton of potential, and he was showcasing it on this particular summer's night in "Beantown." In one of the later innings, he started missing with his pitches, which prompted color commentator Curt Schilling to say, "He has to approach every pitch like he has a 1-0 lead."

When he develops that mentality, the former player noted, Rodriguez will really be successful.

Schilling's comments immediately reminded me of the knife industry.

BLADE SHOW

It was just after 3 on Friday. It was Day 1 of the Blade Show, and I was making my way down a crowded aisle to Spyderco's booth. From one side to the next, people had surrounded the booth, anxious to see



Terrill Hoffman (below) is another example of a passionate *Knives Illustrated* contributor.

what the Colorado-based company had to offer. While standing behind one enthusiast, I finally had a chance to ask a Spyderco rep if Joyce Laituri, their media and public relations rep, was available.

"Sure, she is on the other side of the booth," the woman said.

I looked over and saw her talking with

"... OUR ROSTER OF WRITERS ... ATTACK THE RESEARCH, REVIEWS AND STORIES WITH THE SAME PASSION AND DEDICATION THAT GREAT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYERS HAVE ..."

Garrett Lucas, one of KI's contributors.

I shuffled through the crowd, said hello and listened while they talked about new products and designs. During a brief lull, Joyce turned to me and threw two general knife stories my way. Our conversation stopped only because she had to turn her attention to yet another customer at the booth.

FACES, NAMES

Late in the afternoon, contributor Joshua Swanagon, accompanied by his son, wandered by our booth to talk knives, upcoming stories, photographs and more. This is the same Joshua Swanagon who walked from the SHOT Show to my hotel, which was several miles away, just to say hello ... so he could put a face to the name.

A man without passion and desire does not do that.

PASSION IN KNIVES

So, how does the "Grand Old Game" compare to the knife industry?

As Schilling said about the young Boston pitcher, it's important for him to throw every pitch like the game is on the line, regardless of the score. In essence, Schilling's message was don't let up, keep the intensity and stay focused.

Therein lies the connection.

From publicists like Joyce to our roster of writers — who attack the research, reviews and stories with the same passion and dedication that great Major League Baseball players have — everyone I have dealt with in the knife industry has that mentality to which Schilling alludes.

The next time you encounter someone in the knife industry, don't bother looking up to check the "scoreboard." After all, we know the score is 1-0.

Live strong. **KI**

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NEW PRODUCTS

FROM SURVIVAL TO TACTICAL

AND you thought you had to wait until the SHOT Show to find out what's new in the knife world. In this edition, we're going survival, tactical and practical.

1 CRKT
MODEL: Hyphenate
WEB: www.CRKT.com

Super light.

Would you expect anything else from a world-record holding speed climber of The Nose on Yosemite's El Capitan?

Not likely.

This fixed blade climbing knife crosses over into camping or any other outdoor activity, as well. It features a modified tanto blade design with a combination edge.

Additionally, there are two large holes in the handle to help with grip and cut down on weight, as well as an O₆ wrench. The new line was created in response to Hans Florine's need for tools and blades that could operate as freely as he does.

"I wanted things that were simple, lightweight and safe," Florine recalls. "In climbing, sometimes you have to fashion those for yourself. I'm glad to now be working with CRKT to put these knives and tools into production."



SPECS

SKU: 2450
BLADE LENGTH: 2.230 inches (56.6 mm)
EDGE: Combination
STEEL: 8Cr13MoV, 58-60 HRC
FINISH: Silver stonewash
THICKNESS: 0.120 inches (3.0 mm)
OVERALL: 4.440 inches (121.2 mm)
WEIGHT: 1.2 ounces (34.0 g)
HANDLE: Stainless steel
STYLE: Fixed blade with sheath
SHEATH MATERIAL: Glass reinforced nylon
WEIGHT: 0.9 ounces (25.5 g)
MSRP: \$29.99

2 HOGUE
MODEL: EX-A03
WEB: www.HogueKnives.com

Hogue added three new automatic knives to its line of American-made manual folding knives.

"This is a big step for Hogue Knives," said Hogue managing partner Jim Bruhns. "We worked hard to create an incredibly reliable auto knife based on our button lock knife platform. We're proud to offer these superior cutting tools to our customers."

The key to the auto knife's reliability and performance?

It is the proprietary music wire spring, developed by spring maker Wolf Gunsprings.

"It took four months to nail it," Bruhns explained, "but now that we've dialed in the specs we're delivering an automatic knife that will last for years."

Hogue conducted extensive reliability tests for the new auto knives, including cycle tests in excess of 10,000 blade deployments for each auto knife design.

"Fast blade deployment, a rock-solid lockup, precision engineering and extreme reliability under all conditions are hallmarks of the Hogue auto knife," said Bruhns.

BLADE FEATURES

- 154 CM stainless steel
- Heat treated to RC 57-59
- Cryogenically treated
- Black kote finish
- Hand sharpened and honed
- One piece high density polymer handle in matte black or flat dark
- 3.5-inch drop point blade
- \$209.95



3 REEVES
MODEL: Inkosi
WEB: www.ChrisReeve.com



They think it's going to be a front runner. Inkosi is a new family of folding knives that they are sure will claim the position of chief alongside their Sebenza. The company noticed a trend toward smaller folding knives and has chosen to introduce Inkosi with a 2.75-inch blade.

SPECS

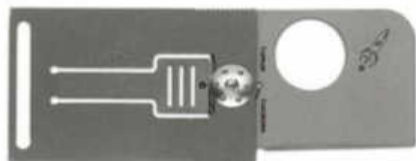
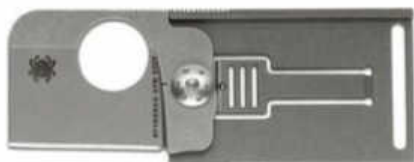
BLADE MATERIAL: CPM S35VN
BLADE HARDNESS: 59-60RC
BLADE LENGTH: 2.75 inches
BLADE THICKNESS: 0.128 inches
HANDLE MATERIAL: 6Al4V titanium
HANDLE LENGTH: 3.875 inches
HANDLE SLAB THICKNESS: 0.125 inches
DOUBLE THUMB LUG: Titanium
STOP PIN, PIVOT PIN, BACK SPACER: Stainless steel
WEIGHT: 3.1 ounces
MSRP: \$375

4 SPYDERCO
MODEL: Squarehead
WEB: www.Spyderco.com

It is compact, elegant and simple. It's a pocketknife that offers cutting performance far beyond its diminutive size. It's the Squarehead.

Designed by full-time engineer and part-time custom knifemaker Darriel Caston, the Squarehead reflects his obsession with small folding knives and novel mechanical gadgets. The heart of the Squarehead is its square-shaped sheepfoot blade machined from CPM S30V powder-metallurgy stainless steel. Its single-sided, flat chisel grind provides "excellent edge geometry" and strength and allows the PlainEdge cutting edge to lie safely against the handle scale.

A trademark Round Hole in the blade identifies the Squarehead as a Spyderco product and allows easy one or two-handed opening. Its single-sided handle is machined from a solid piece of titanium.



SPECS

CLOSED LENGTH: 2 inches
BLADE LENGTH: 1.30 inches
EDGE LENGTH: 1.25 inches
BLADE THICKNESS: .118 inches
STEEL: CPM S30V
WEIGHT: 1.1 ounces
GRIND: Flat chisel
BLADE COATING: None
LOCK: Liner lock
HANDLE: Titanium
MSRP: \$129.95

5 STEEL WILL
MODEL: DarkAngel
WEB: www.SMGOutdoor.com

It's time to shed a little light on Steel Will's DarkAngel.

This tactical knife is a combination of a "fierce and effective predatory blade with an elegant handle, whose grooves are textured like angel wings." This large knife has a long 5.83-inch blade and has a relatively low weight for its size.

Due to its shape, the blade is designed for excellent penetrating ability. A dark PVD coating protects the blade from glare and corrosion. The DarkAngel's tang extends through the entire handle, which ensures the strength and integrity of the knife. The handle is cast from Forprene, which is comfortable to the touch and provides a secure grip. Added security is also offered by the DarkAngel's finger guard.

The glass breaker, formed by the tang running through the handle, further increases the versatility of this knife. The DarkAngel comes with a Kydex sheath which may be fastened to belts or packs using the included clip. This suspension system allows for carry on the body or equipment in multiple configurations.

SPECS

BLADE MATERIAL: N690Co
FULL LENGTH: 11.26 inches
BLADE LENGTH: 5.83 inches
BLADE THICKNESS: 0.20 inches
BLADE-HRC: 58-60
FINISH: PVD
HANDLE MATERIAL: Forprene
SHEATH MATERIAL: Kydex
MADE IN: Italy
MSRP: \$159.99



6 KUTMASTER

MODEL: 91-M5018CP
WEB: www.KutMaster.com

Dig what's new.

Kutmaster, a division of Utica Cutlery Company, will be introducing a new Mini Personal Survival tool to its Minimaster line of multi-tools.

The patented stainless Model 91-M5018CP incorporates a unique Moonshine camo wildfire pattern on the handles of the tool. The 13-function tool measures 2 1/2 inches in length and weighs less than 2 ounces. It can easily be carried in one's pocket, purse or on a key ring.

BLADE FEATURES

- Fire starter magnesium flint with striker
- Clip blade
- Universal screwdriver/nail file
- Phillips screwdriver
- Medium screwdriver
- Scissors bottle opener/cap lifter
- Landyard
- 3 hex wrench openings measuring 1/4", 5/16" and 3/8"



7 CASE & SONS

MODEL: Chainlink Collection
WEB: www.WRCase.com

This will surely catch your eye, especially if you are a collector.

Each single-bladed knife in the Chainlink series features a diamond-shaped mesh pattern that wraps around a gray bone handle with a built-in belt clip, nickel silver bolsters a surgical steel blade and Case Oval script shield.

SPECS

RussLock with Clip – with Chainlink Bone Handle

Pattern: Russlock (61953LC SS)

One-hand opening, liner locking clip blade (made of Case Tru-Sharp surgical steel)

Laser-engraved chainlink bone handle

Case oval script shield

High-polished nickel silver bolsters

Thumb stud

Belt clip

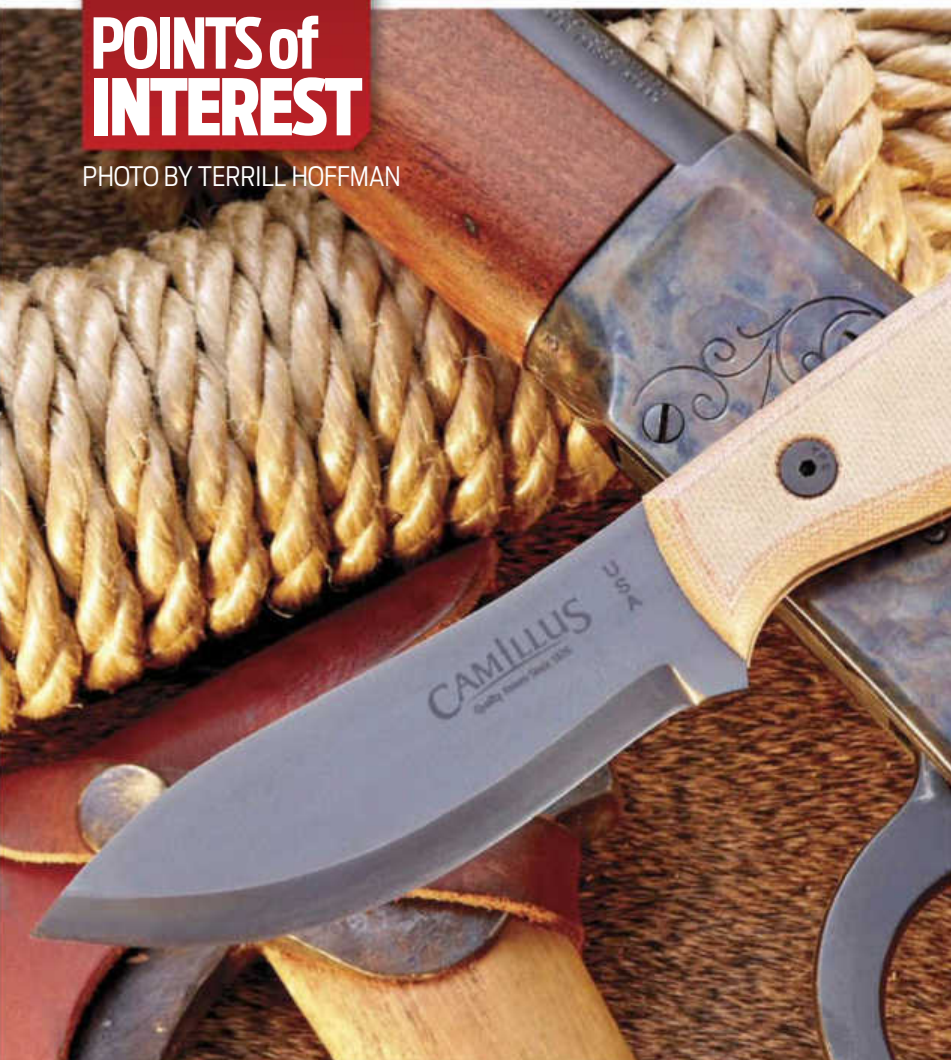
4 1/4 inches (10.8 cm) closed, 2.7 ounces (76.59 g)

MSRP: \$106.99 to \$139.99 **KI**



POINTS of INTEREST

PHOTO BY TERRILL HOFFMAN




9 Years Strong

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION FIGHTS FOR KNIFE RIGHTS

The numbers are impressive. Knife Rights has only been in existence for nine years, yet they can claim 19 legislative victories in 14 states. Their very important goal: "a sharper future for all Americans."

Doug Ritter, the chairman of Knife Rights, says the organization is dedicated to providing knife owners an effective voice in public policy, opposing laws that restrict the right to own, use and carry knives. It does this through an aggressive legislative agenda as well as by the defense of knife owners' civil rights in court. Review a complete rundown of their success in that mission at: www.KnifeRights.org.

If you'd like to become a member, see below. 

MEMBERSHIP FACTS

1 TO JOIN: Go to www.KnifeRights.org

2 THE COST: \$32 annually for an individual

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SEVEN PAGES OF ROCKIN'
KNIVES AND
PHOTOGRAPHY ..."**





How To Reach Him

NAME

Jim Cooper

WEB

www.SharpByCoop.com



MAKER: Behring
MODEL: Urlander
TYPE: Fixed
BLADE LENGTH: 3 ¾ inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 8 inches
HANDLE MATERIAL: Coplobold, black oxide coated steel
PRICE: \$275
WEB: www.BehringMade.com

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MAKER: Zac Buchanan

MODEL: Oregon Hunter

TYPE: Fixed

BLADE LENGTH: 4 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 8 1/2 inches

HANDLE MATERIAL: Amber sambar stag

PRICE: \$600

WEB: www.ZacBuchananKnives.com



MAKER: Jeff Freeman/Freeman Outdoor Gear
MODEL: 451 BLF
BLADE LENGTH: 3.7 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.75 inches
HANDLE MATERIAL: G-10
PRICE: \$200
WEB: www.FreemanOutdoorGear.com




MAKER: Paul Jarvis
MODEL: Osoraku Bowie
BLADE LENGTH: 7 1/2 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 12 1/2 inches
HANDLE MATERIAL: Walrus ivory
PRICE: \$6,000
EMAIL: pauljarvisknives@gmail.com



CONQUER YOUR WORLD.



MAKER: Jean-Louis Regel
MODEL: 5 mastersmiths fee knives
BLADE LENGTH: Varies
OVERALL LENGTH: Varies
PRICE: Contact the maker
WEB: www.JeanLouis-Knives.com 



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S P E C I A L
BUSHCRAFT
S E C T I O N

SURVIVAL READY

BUSHCRAFT KNIVES THAT GET THE JOB DONE

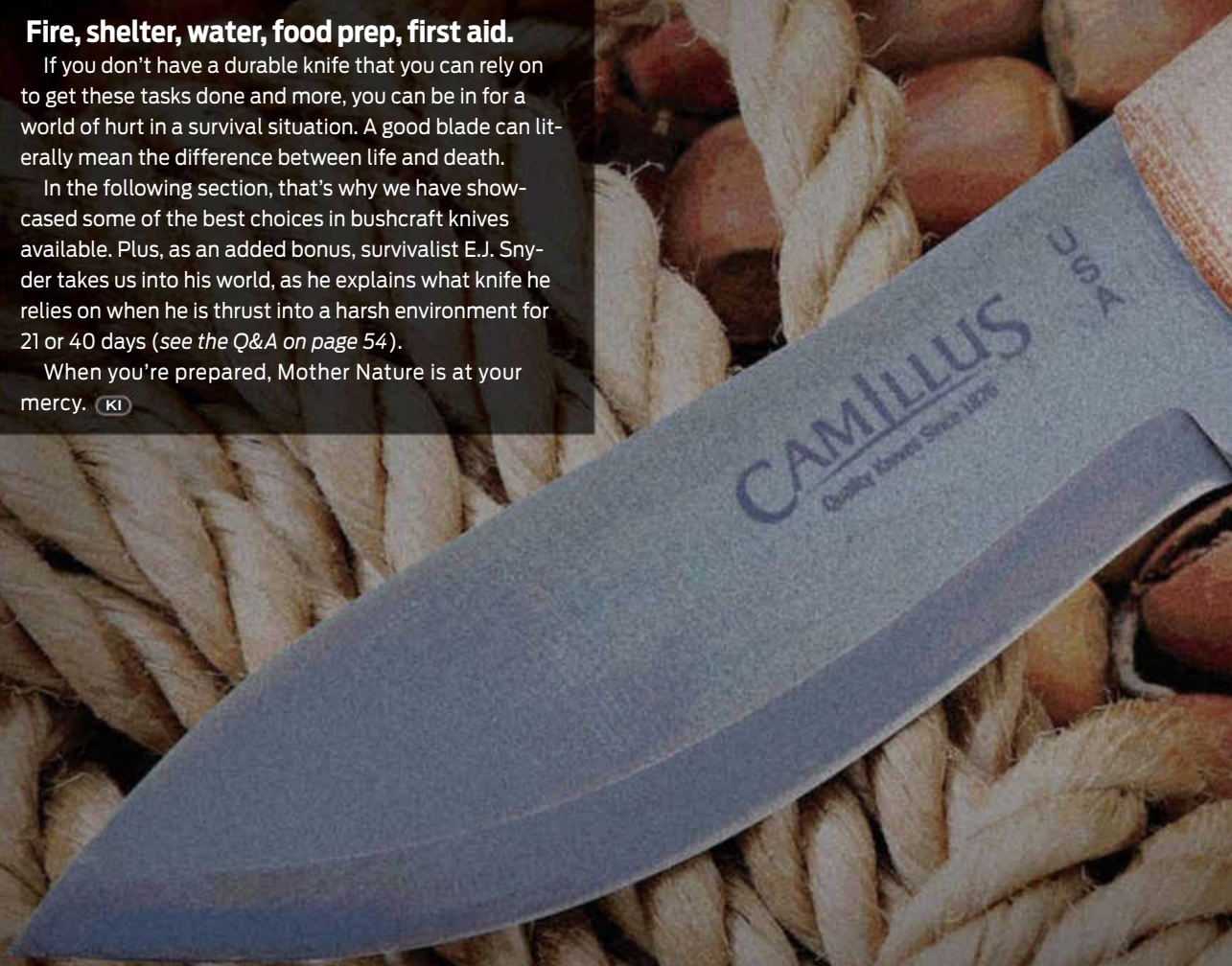
PHOTO BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

Fire, shelter, water, food prep, first aid.

If you don't have a durable knife that you can rely on to get these tasks done and more, you can be in for a world of hurt in a survival situation. A good blade can literally mean the difference between life and death.

In the following section, that's why we have showcased some of the best choices in bushcraft knives available. Plus, as an added bonus, survivalist E.J. Snyder takes us into his world, as he explains what knife he relies on when he is thrust into a harsh environment for 21 or 40 days (*see the Q&A on page 54*).

When you're prepared, Mother Nature is at your mercy. **(KI)**





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ARTISTICALLY
FINISHED
KNIVES THAT
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WAS A BROAD-
BLADED BEAUTY
THAT WAS
SIMPLE ..."**

POWERFUL PERFORMANCE VERSATILE PACKAGE

THE FIDDLEBACK FORGE CAMP KNIFE
DELIVERS IN THE FIELD

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY GARRETT LUCAS

AT the Blade Show, it wasn't all the beautiful, artistically finished knives that drew my attention. It was a broad-bladed beauty that was simple, but quite attractive to my eye. The knife that drew me in was Fiddleback Forge's new Mid-Tech Camp Knife.

CAMP KNIFE

Specifications

OVERALL LENGTH: 11 inches

BLADE LENGTH: 6.5 inches

HANDLE LENGTH: 5.5 inches

BLADE THICKNESS: 3/16 inch

STEEL TYPE: CPM 3V

GRIP MATERIAL: Canvas Micarta

MSRP: \$350



I first heard of Fiddleback Forge in 2009 and had the chance shortly thereafter to review a couple of their knives.

Speaking with Andy Roy (owner and knife maker) at the time was a true pleasure. He'd only been making knives for three years and had just gone full-time with the endeavor. He was enthusiastic and had some great ideas along with some beautiful creations already.

Forging Ahead

Even back in his early days, Andy had a strong following, and there were plenty of people giving great feedback on his knives on a couple of forums. That word-of-

mouth advertising quickly had him stocked up on orders for his custom knives.

When I saw him at the Blade Show this year, we spoke for a while. It was then that I learned about his new Mid-Tech line. It appears that he has stepped his game up to a whole new level in the last six years. In order to meet the increasing demand for his knives, Andy has recently expanded his business to include a new line of Mid-Tech offerings.

Mid-Tech knives are those that are made on a semi-production basis. The knife blanks are cut from steel with a water jet and then sent out to be heat treated. Once back in the factory, the knives

have some finishing touches put on them, and they are released for sale. Because each knife is no longer made entirely by hand, there's a higher production yield, and the prices are lower. Knives chosen for this process are selected from the more popular and proven designs from his handmade offerings.

The Mid-Tech Camp Knife and Others

With its 6.5-inch blade, the Camp Knife is a substantial tool to have on your side in the wild. The blade is 3/16-inch-thick CPM 3V steel, and at its widest point, the blade is 1 7/8 inches across.



The Camp Knife comes with a perfectly functional sheath that's a medium-ride carry style. Certainly, a dangler attachment can be added for those that like a sheath to ride lower.



The Fiddleback Production Camp Knife has just the right dimensions to make it very versatile, yet easy to carry. The 5.5-inch handle allows for multiple holds on the knife depending on what chore you're doing.

CPM 3V is known for its wear resistance and its toughness, meaning it's less brittle and unlikely to chip. Additionally, CPM 3V is very shock resistant, and according to Crucible's data sheet, it approaches the performance of S7. This is a great feature for those that like to baton firewood and do a lot of chopping.

The 5.5-inch handle is three-dimensionally contoured for comfort (according to the company's website), and is long enough for multi-

ple hold positions. The grips are buyer's choice between natural canvas Micarta and black canvas Micarta. The handle features crenelated grip slabs to provide a secure grip on the handle, even wet.

It's About Time!

I don't know about where you live, but it's been a weird summer here. It's been raining every day for the past two weeks like we're in

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HIKING BUDDY

Specifications

OVERALL LENGTH: 7.25 inches

BLADE LENGTH: 3.25 inches

HANDLE LENGTH: 4.00 inches

BLADE THICKNESS: 1/8 inch

STEEL TYPE: CPM S35VN

GRIP MATERIAL: Canvas Micarta

MSRP: \$195

THE HIKING BUDDY

The Camp Knife's Little, But Older Brother

WHY REVIEW ONE KNIFE WHEN YOU CAN REVIEW TWO?

An earlier-released Mid-Tech model is the Hiking Buddy. Also a production piece, the Hiking Buddy is designed for smaller chores along the trail and in camp. In contrast to the Camp Knife, the Hiking Buddy is only 7.25 inches long, with a blade length of 3.25 inches.

It's obvious that Fiddleback Forge is taking its Mid-Tech line seriously when you consider the material choices the company has made. The Hiking Buddy's core is CPM S35VN steel, which is a latest-generation steel for knives of this sort. The blade is 1/8 inch thick, and because of the upsweep in the belly during the last inch, it ends in a wicked point that will get into tight places with no problem.

PERFORMANCE TESTED

Though the focus of this review was on the Camp Knife, we thought it would be fun to use a smaller knife in conjunction with the large one. Fiddleback Forge provided their Hiking Buddy, another model in their Mid-Tech line, to use along with the Camp Knife. Even though I was primarily testing the Camp Knife, looking back, the Hiking Buddy probably got used as much as its larger brother.

It was great for carving, shaving tinder, opening packages, cutting cord to tie off poles, and for the other 101 uses that come into play in the outdoors. The handle is very comfortable, and it's large enough to get precise control of the blade. I also like the profile of the blade a good deal. It allows the user to get good penetration if needed, and the point can get into tight areas when you're doing precision work like triggers.

The Hiking Buddy sports a 1/8-inch thick S35VN blade that is 3.25 inches long. As a companion piece, it's a great blade to have for the small chores like cutting cord, whittling and carving, and for use during meal time.

April, but it finally let up a bit, and we got a little play time in with the Camp Knife and Hiking Buddy (see the accompanying sidebars) on a couple of occasions. I wasn't looking forward to the heat, but I was sick of being stuck inside for so long.

While I know axes are the best for chopping trees, I don't carry an axe with me in the woods, especially on shorter jaunts. I have yet to see anyone on a hiking or backpacking trip carrying an axe. There are times, however, when you might need a larger knife to help build an expedient shelter, process wood, or for a hundred other uses.

Test #1

The first test I put the Camp Knife through was chopping through a rather large limb on a Hickory tree that was downed a few months ago. The diameter was around seven to eight inches. I didn't have a measuring tape, but you can see the size of the limb in comparison to the 6.5-inch blade. I used a timer on my watch to see how long it would take to chop through the limb and paused it during breaks.

I've won a few chopping contests here and there, but this limb was extremely tough. I took a break at the 4-minute mark, the 8-minute mark and the 12-minute mark. (It wasn't a race.



A nice companion for the Camp Knife is the Hiking Buddy, which is offered in the Mid-Tech production line-up. These two knives would work well together to cover a broad range of backwoods chores.



Though the Camp Knife and Hiking Buddy each come with a very usable sheath, the combination of the two begs for a large sheath with a piggy-back sheath to carry both knives together.

Nothing says you can't take a breather during your work.)

At the eight-minute mark, I took a couple of photos to mark the progress. And, after the third break, I started chopping again until the deed was done. It took a total of 13 minutes and 38 seconds. I guess they call it hardwood for a reason.

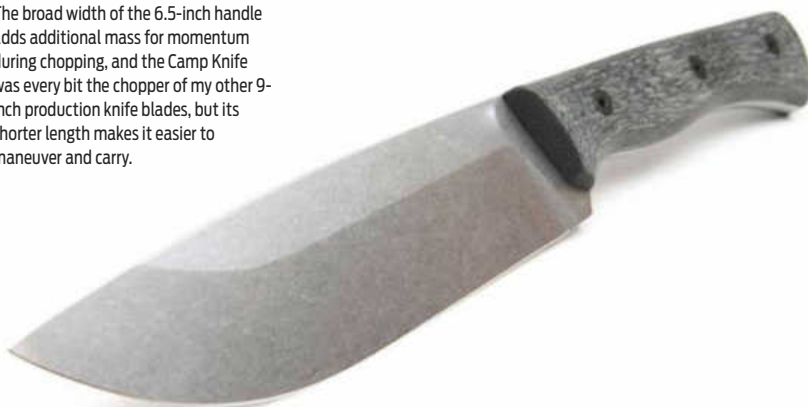
Yeah, yeah, I know. Sheer insanity! Nobody would do that out there in the woods. I agree, 100 percent. The point of the test was to see what the Camp Knife was capable of, especially considering it only has a 6.5-inch blade, while most choppers are 9 inches or longer.

I would never do this in a normal situation. I'd either use a pocket chainsaw or a Sven Saw, but it's nice to know to what extreme you can take your knife and still have that sense of confidence in its durability and reliability.

Some Observations

I was very impressed with the bites I got out of the wood. There were a couple of moments where I let loose with everything I had and was surprised by chunks I was able to cut out. However, I had to hold back a bit on the force and speed of the chops because I didn't have a lanyard on the knife, and I was all alone out there.

The broad width of the 6.5-inch handle adds additional mass for momentum during chopping, and the Camp Knife was every bit the chopper of my other 9-inch production knife blades, but its shorter length makes it easier to maneuver and carry.



The 4-inch handle on the Hiking Buddy is a perfect length to get a strong grip for the harder tasks, plus it fills the hand enough to ensure control of the blade.



The fit of the Micarta grip slabs to the handle is superb, and the underside of the grip area is very clean and extremely comfortable to use for long periods.



After a lot of fast chopping, you can get fatigued, the arms start feeling a bit rubbery, and little slips and accidents can sometimes happen.

The Camp Knife does not have an attachment point for a lanyard, and I asked Andy Roy about this. He said they originally had a specific design for their first

Progress Report: While chopping the large limb of a downed oak tree, we took note of the progress made at the 8-minute mark.



" ... IT'S NICE TO KNOW TO WHAT EXTREME YOU CAN TAKE YOUR KNIFE AND STILL HAVE THAT SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN ITS DURABILITY AND RELIABILITY."


run of the Camp Knives where they were trying to achieve something different with the handle, but going forward, the Camp Knife will include a lanyard attachment point. That's good news for those folks that would use this as a chopper. Had there been a lanyard attached, I think the time it took to chop through that limb would have improved by a decent amount.

When that test was concluded, I checked the edge for any chipping and other stress indicators, and the edge looked almost like it just came out of the box. I think the use of CPM 3V was a smart move, because it is resistant to

wear and chipping, and it holds up well to impact. Even after that extreme test, the knife was still plenty sharp enough to use as a chef's knife to slice up some Bega canned cheese and some summer sausage for a mid-day snack.

It's All Downhill from Here

After that grueling exercise, everything else was a breeze. I did everything from chopping a young tree for a baton to harvesting other trees for shelter poles. The blade sung its way through those jobs. One decent-sized shelter pole only took three chops before it was down. The width of the blade really



Using the Camp Knife to make a baton for processing firewood was child's play compared to chopping on the oak limb.



Using the 6.5-inch blade for scale, you can see the size of the oak limb that was chopped through in 13 minutes and 38 seconds.

helps with getting good momentum during the swing.

After running through those “drills,” I put the Camp Knife through the last test,



CAMP KNIFE's Performance Highlights

THE AUTHOR'S LIKES

- 1 It has a fantastic blend of materials and design
- 2 Good performance
- 3 Great versatility

if you want to call it that. I used it to baton through several pieces of firewood. The main reason I did that was to see how the high sabre grind would lend itself to batoning. On a lot of knives, the shoulders of a sabre grind force the wood far enough apart that, during the batoning process, you're not really splitting the wood with the edge, you're just hammering a steel bar through the piece of wood.

That wasn't the case with the Camp Knife, and it's another great reason to have such a wide blade. Aside from adding mass for momentum, when batoning wood, that wide blade allows the



The Hiking Buddy was used quite a bit for carving, cutting open food packs, making tinder, cutting cord — and all the other stuff you do when you're playing in the woods. It's a great little knife to have on hand in conjunction with the Camp Knife.

edge to still reach down far enough to cut and split the wood — even with the shoulders up top spreading the wood apart. This makes splitting the wood easier and much more efficient.

Final Thoughts

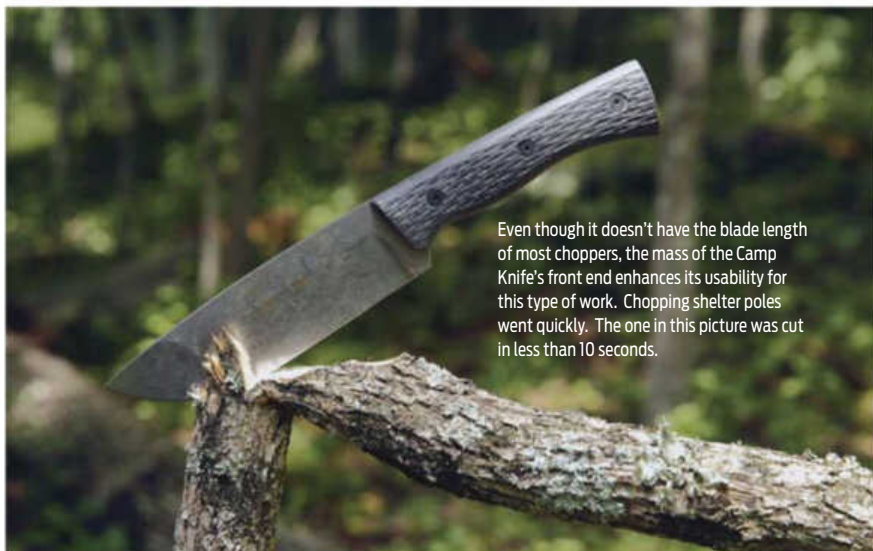
What can I say?

I was truly impressed by the Fiddleback Forge Mid-Tech Camp Knife. I think it's a fantastic blend of materials and design, considering the price and that it's a production knife.

Where the Camp Knife really shines is performance and versatility. There's an old expression from boxing about someone “punching above their weight.” I believe that expression applies to the Camp Knife, given the blade length by how well it performed in the field.

This is just the beginning for Fiddleback Forge's Mid-Tech line. I was informed that new models in the line-up for Mid-Tech production include the Duke, Bushcrafter, Kephart, and Bushboot. If the characteristics of the two knives I just used extend into the rest of the line, I think there's going to be a lot of happy knife users out there. I know I haven't been disappointed by a Fiddleback Forge knife yet, and I'm confident that I never will. **KI**

Garrett Lucas has been an outdoors and preparedness enthusiast for 25 years. His areas of interest and expertise include firearms, edged tools, and preparedness gear and practices. He has written articles on these topics for over eight years.



Even though it doesn't have the blade length of most choppers, the mass of the Camp Knife's front end enhances its usability for this type of work. Chopping shelter poles went quickly. The one in this picture was cut in less than 10 seconds.

S P E C I A L
BUSHCRAFT
S E C T I O N

ROUGH & READY

OFFERING
PERFORMANCE
AND VALUE, THE
BAJA 4.5 HITS
THE GROUND
RUNNING AS A
BUSHCRAFT
TOOL

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY GARRETT LUCAS

EARLY humans have been using knives of one sort or another for over two million years. They were essential to our survival ... whether it was for warfare or to process game.





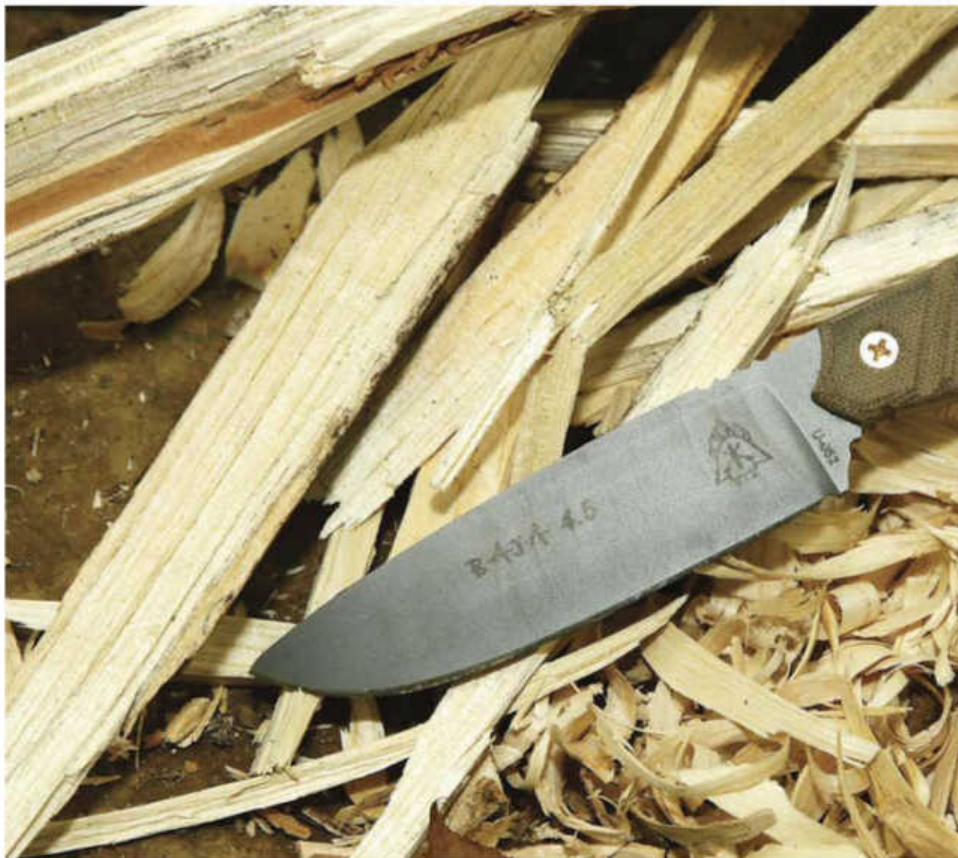


Having owned several TOPS Knives products in the past, the leather sheath was a nice bonus over Kydex, and is appropriate to this style of knife.

We didn't start using metals like copper and bronze until around 5,000 to 7,000 years ago (give or take a few hundred years). Ever since then, we've done nothing but improve upon the manufacture of the most important tool in our history. I often wonder what the reaction of some of our pre-historic ancestors would be if they had the chance to use the blades we have access to in today's world.

This brings us to the TOPS Knives Baja 4.5 knife, which is an evolution, of sorts, of its older brother, the Baja 3.0. What occasioned my musings on knives that have been used throughout history is the reaction I have when I look at the Baja 4.5 and use it. While it's outfitted with attractive fittings and cut and textured using the latest technologies, there still seems to be something primal about it. It's more of a visceral stirring, rather than a factual point that I could demonstrate or prove, but it's still there.

After the batoning exercise, it took about 10 minutes to slice off a good amount of tinder shavings and split the smaller pieces up for kindling.

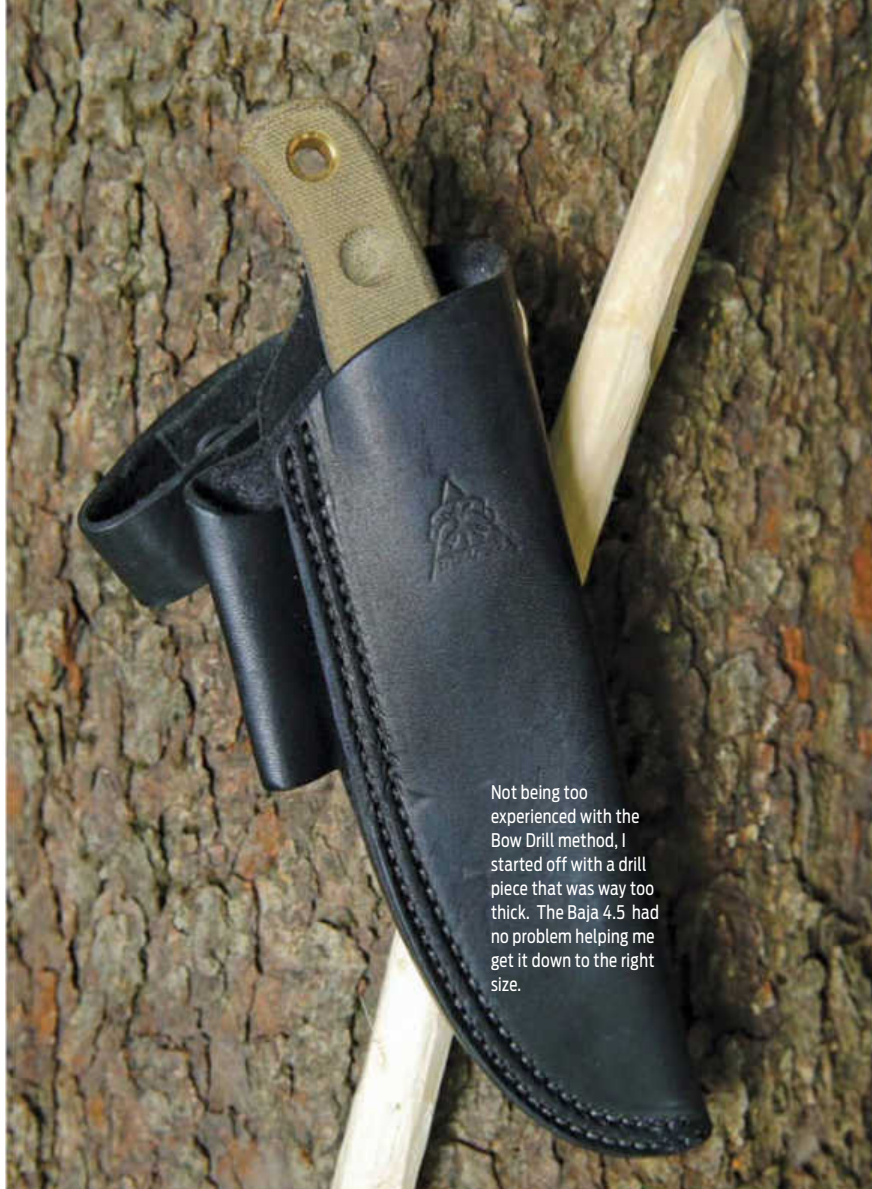


Style through Simplicity

The Baja 4.5 walks the line between having a ruggedized style for the outdoors and having a few decorative characteristics. It has an overall length of 9.25 inches with a 4.88-inch blade that's finished in TOPS Knives' Black River Wash, which is a process that leaves a unique finish on each knife. The steel is 1095, which is a high carbon steel that's commonly found in a lot of knives of this style. What I do like about the Black River Wash finish is that it replaces the thick powder-coating found on a lot of 1095 knives, which makes them less-efficient slicers; plus, it's more appealing than the usual black powder coat.

The clean and attractive finish on the blade extends on to the

"IT WORKED WELL AT VARIOUS TASKS THAT ONE WILL TYPICALLY DO IN THE WILD TO SURVIVE THE ELEMENTS."



Not being too experienced with the Bow Drill method, I started off with a drill piece that was way too thick. The Baja 4.5 had no problem helping me get it down to the right size.



The brass-toned, Phillips-head fittings added a distinct style to the Baja 4.5 and contrast nicely with the green canvas Micarta grips.




A brass-lined lanyard hold maintains the consistency in style, and further up the handle resides a second bit of jimping in the choil.



The handle of the Baja 4.5 incorporates attractive white liners, and the spine just above the handle sports a bit of jimping to gain a more traction on the knife.



The Black River Wash finish on the Baja 4.5 is applied in a way that each blade comes out with its own unique style.



The Baja 4.5 is just about the perfect size for a survival knife that's strong enough to do what needs done, yet is still fairly easy to carry without getting in the way.

The dangle attachment to the leather sheath makes wearing the sheath more comfortable, and keeps the blade a bit more accessible without having to shift position.

handle area, which incorporates green canvas Micarta scales that are attached with brass Phillips-head fittings. These aren't the typical fittings for handle scales these days, so it adds a bit of "old world" appeal to the overall package. Also found on the grips are a bow drill divot and three wide diagonal grooves that offer nice aesthetics along with a better purchase on the handle. Additionally, the handle has a generously sized hole at the end for those who prefer the use of lanyards on knives of this size.

Though the 1095 steel and canvas Micarta scales scream "outdoors," it's all the little things like the Black River Wash finish, the brass fittings, and the white liners that elevate the Baja 4.5 a bit from many similar offerings on the market.

Accessorizing the Baja 4.5

Several of my favorite personal knives were made by TOPS Knives, but this was the first time I saw a (black) leather sheath with a knife

in one of their boxes when I opened it. Several of their knives are sold with Kydex sheaths, but I just like the feel and smell of leather, so the leather sheath was certainly a bonus! Heeding current trends in the bushcrafter crowds, TOPS Knives included a dangle attachment to the sheath that makes it more comfortable to wear, carry and access.

Included with the sheath is TOPS' own three-rod fire starting set, which includes two magnesium rods along with a flint rod. Attached to the fire starter is a TOPS survival whistle as well. The nice extra step the company took was to incorporate a loop into the sheath where the fire starter is stored. I've heard the expression before that man's ability to survive comes down to being able to cut things and make fire. With the Baja 4.5 knife and kit, you've got the essentials covered in the event of a dire situation.

Out In the Field

When reviewing knives on a regular basis, one of the tricky things to do is to make sure you use the knife enough to get a real sense of its performance. This is particularly true for knives like the Baja 4.5, which could be relied upon during a survival situation. These knives require a bit more scrutiny. So, I made sure to take the Baja out with me on several occasions to get an honest appraisal of its abilities. The first outing was a simple one.



I had to set up an impromptu range on my land for a gun review I was conducting, and I had brought along a couple of eight foot, treated 2x2's. Rather than cut points on the ends with a power saw, I deliberately chose to use the Baja 4.5 to carve the ends enough to drive the 2x2's in the ground. The 5/32's thick blade, with its flat grind, had no problem biting into the wood and making the carving process fairly easy, and the two new "stakes" were ready in no time.

TOPS decided to split the difference with the blade thickness. They wanted the knife's blade to be stronger than 1/8-inch stock, but they still wanted it to be an effective slicer, so they backed off from a 3/16-inch thickness and hit in the middle at 5/32 inch. It seems to be a good compromise, as I was able to use the Baja to baton firewood and still use it for finer cutting tasks such as shaving tinder and carving a drill to use with a bow for starting a fire.

These observations were made during a couple of other outings deep into the woods. It wasn't exactly the same environment as the Sonoran Desert, but I was still able to find enough uses for it to get an idea of how it would fare in a survival scenario.

Processing Wood

Normally, I use a knife with a longer blade to do my "batoning" for the campfire. No reason to get riled up. Some people like hatchets, some people don't. With its 4.5-inch blade length, you have to bit a little choosy with the size of the wood you pick to process. That said, the Baja 4.5 held up to quite a bit of batoning on a couple of different occasions being no

worse for the wear at the end. The 5/32-inch blade turned out to be strong enough to handle the extra stress, given the size of wood I was using.

Once I would work my way inside the wood, where it was drier, I was able to quickly shave large piles of tinder along with split off some slightly larger pieces for kindling. The first time I did this, I processed a whole log, got the tinder, and the kindling pieces all in about 15 minutes — after finding the right size piece of wood to process.

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**"WITH THE BAJA 4.5
KNIFE AND KIT,
YOU'VE GOT THE
ESSENTIALS COVERED
IN THE EVENT OF A
DIRE SITUATION."**



The first test for the Baja 4.5 was a mild one, carving the ends of two 2x2's to set up an impromptu target stand.



Though I typically like blades that are a bit longer for batoning, the Baja 4.5 had no issues processing several pieces of wood to get ready for a fire — though prudent size selection to account for the blade length.

Making Fire

I used two different techniques with the Baja 4.5 to make fire. I saved the easiest method for last and first tried my hand at making a bow drill.

First, I want to say that I'm not an expert bushcrafter. I've still got things to learn in the area of primitive skills, and that's why I enjoy doing these types of articles. My main knowledge base has to do with preparedness, cutlery in general, and firearms. There's a difference between being a bushcrafter and a prepper. I only point that out because I had a rather humbling experience with the bow drill method.

The first drill I made was too short and then the second was way too thick, but that turned out to be a gift of sorts, because I had to put a lot of work into that one with the Baja 4.5 to get it down to a reasonable diameter.



The Paracord Spool Tool is one of the handiest tools I've used outdoors, and it was very useful in keeping everything neat and orderly while I was making the bow for the drill.

One thing I noticed while choking up one the knife was that the jimping was fairly aggressive in both the choil and on top of the spine. The jimping in the choil area didn't bother me as much because I was putting most of the pressure on the top side where jimping on the spine resides.

If someone were using the Baja 4.5 in foul weather and using gloves, the pres-

2 BONUS

1 The sheath comes with a three-rod fire starting set, and this includes two magnesium rods along with a flint rod.

2 A survival whistle is also attached to the fire starter.

ent jimping would be great to help keep the hand in place. However, with just bare hands, it felt like the jimping could be rounded off a bit to mitigate the depth to which the sharp edges bite into the thumb. But, this is more of a question of personal preference, and it depends on the environment and intended use.

The last test was to use the supplied fire starter with a big pile of wood shavings I put together with the Baja. After I shaved off a decent amount of the magnesium, I tried using the spine to get a spark. I got a little one, but not a nice shower like I prefer. I tried a couple of more times and then ended up using the blade edge to get a nice spray of sparks that ignited both the magnesium and tinder. I only needed two strikes with the blade edge to get the fire going. I hate using the blade edge for this purpose, but it held up well enough. But, I used it several times for this purpose and at some point, I'll give the edge a touch-up when I have some time.

The Final Word

Overall, the Baja 4.5 favorably impressed me. It strikes a nice balance between rugged styling and more than capable performance. It worked well at various tasks that one will typically do in the wild to survive the elements.

Despite the blade length, it was strong enough to hold up to batoning, yet the blade was fine enough for precise work.

The inclusion of the leather sheath, along with the dangler attachment, is an added bonus, and this will help facilitate the Baja 4.5's entry into the ever-increasing crowd of bushcrafter and survival style knives.

If you're looking for a knife with great aesthetics, strong performance, and offers real value for the money, the Baja 4.5 is a knife you should check out. **KI**

DOUBLE TEAM

THE PRIMITIVE BUSH KNIFE, A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN DUAL SURVIVAL'S MATT GRAHAM & CONDOR, PERFORMS IN THE WILD

BY TIM STETZER

KEEN eyes. Regular readers of *Knives Illustrated* have them.

As such, I suspect you pay a little more attention to what knives are being used in movies and television shows than most viewers do. Thus, you probably noted that when Matt Graham joined the cast of the Discovery Channel's "Dual Survival" the knife he was using was a bit hard to identify at first.

Why? Matt was using a factory knife that he had modified to meet his specifications. Matt started with a Condor Knife and Tool Jungle Bowie, which





Condor Tool & Knife hooked up with the Discovery Channel's Matt Graham from the popular survival series "Dual Survival" to make a production knife. It imbuces the characteristics that Matt created with his hand-modified Condor jungle Bowie that he used on earlier episodes of the show.

SPECIFICATIONS

BLADE MATERIAL: 420HC stainless steel

BLADE LENGTH: 8 inches

BLADE THICKNESS: 3mm

BLADE HARDNESS: 56-58 HRC

BLADE FINISH: Blasted satin

OVERALL LENGTH: 13.5 inches

HANDLE MATERIAL: Central American hardwood

SHEATH MATERIAL: Handcrafted welted leather

WEIGHT: 15 ounces

DESIGNER: Matt Graham

MADE IN EL SALVADOR

CONTACT INFO

COMPANY

Condor Tool & Knife

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www.CondorTK.com

he had reshaped into the knife he used on the show.

It was an interesting choice made all the more so by his own personal modifications, and it wasn't long before the folks at Condor hooked up with Matt to talk about his modifications and why he made them. What came out of those discussions was the Condor Primitive Bush Knife, a factory-made knife that exemplified the features that Matt had created with his modified jungle Bowie.

The Path To a Knife

When Matt sat down with the folks at Condor, they ended up designing an entirely new knife, and the Primitive Bush Knife has some interesting features that buck the trend in outdoors knives a bit.

It's a big knife clocking in at 13.5 inches overall, and it sports an 8-inch blade. Unlike a lot of big knives on the market that are also very thick, the Primitive Bush Knife is only 3 mm thick, about what a stout machete checks in at. This helps keep the overall weight of the knife down but still provides a nice balance of cutting



The low drop point blade has a profile similar to the ancient Seax utility and battle knives of Northern Europe, a design that dates back nearly 1,500 years.

power and slicing ability.

The blade itself is made of the same 420HC stainless steel that Condor uses for their machetes. Condor has a lot of experience with this steel and knows how to heat-treat it for a good balance of durability and edge retention. I know a lot of readers aren't fans of the 400 series stainless steels, but the fact is that it works well and is easy to maintain. I've heard a fair number of requests for the knife to be offered in carbon steel, and I wouldn't mind seeing that myself; in the meantime though, I'm fine with the 420HC.

The blade shape is a long drop point with the tip of the knife a bit below cen-



The Condor Primitive Bush knife comes with a unique, high quality leather sheath well suited to the design.



The Condor's grip has dual palm swells and worked well in both a traditional grip and reverse, edge in grip for carving.

"THIS HELPS KEEP THE OVERALL WEIGHT OF THE KNIFE DOWN BUT STILL PROVIDES A NICE BALANCE OF CUTTING POWER AND SLICING ABILITY."

terline. It uses a Scandinavian-style edge and has a 1-inch section of sharpened blade swedge to increase penetration and make for a finer tip. The overall blade style reminds me of a Seax, a design that dates back nearly 1,500 years. The Seax was used in Northern Europe as both an everyday tool, as well as a weapon, and variations of the design were in steady use for centuries; that speaks well of the pattern's usefulness.



The Primitive Bush knife is 3mm thick, which is thick enough to be tough, but not so thick as to add unnecessary weight.



The Primitive Bush Knife uses an 8-inch blade with a below-centerline point. The left side of the blade bears Matt Graham's signature as well as the trademark "Eye of the Condor" hole in the blade.

The Bush Knife uses a good-sized 5-inch handle comprised of two slabs of Central American hardwood. Condor doesn't say exactly what it is although they do say that some of the wood they use is similar to hickory. This one has a color and grain that look more like walnut to me. Whatever it is, it's attractive and

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SCOUTING REPORT WHAT THE KNIFE HAS

- 1 A nice balance of cutting power and slicing ability
- 2 The blade has a good balance of durability and edge retention
- 3 The 420HC stainless steel is easy to maintain
- 4 Designed for increased penetration
- 5 Symmetrical handle
- 6 Good for chopping

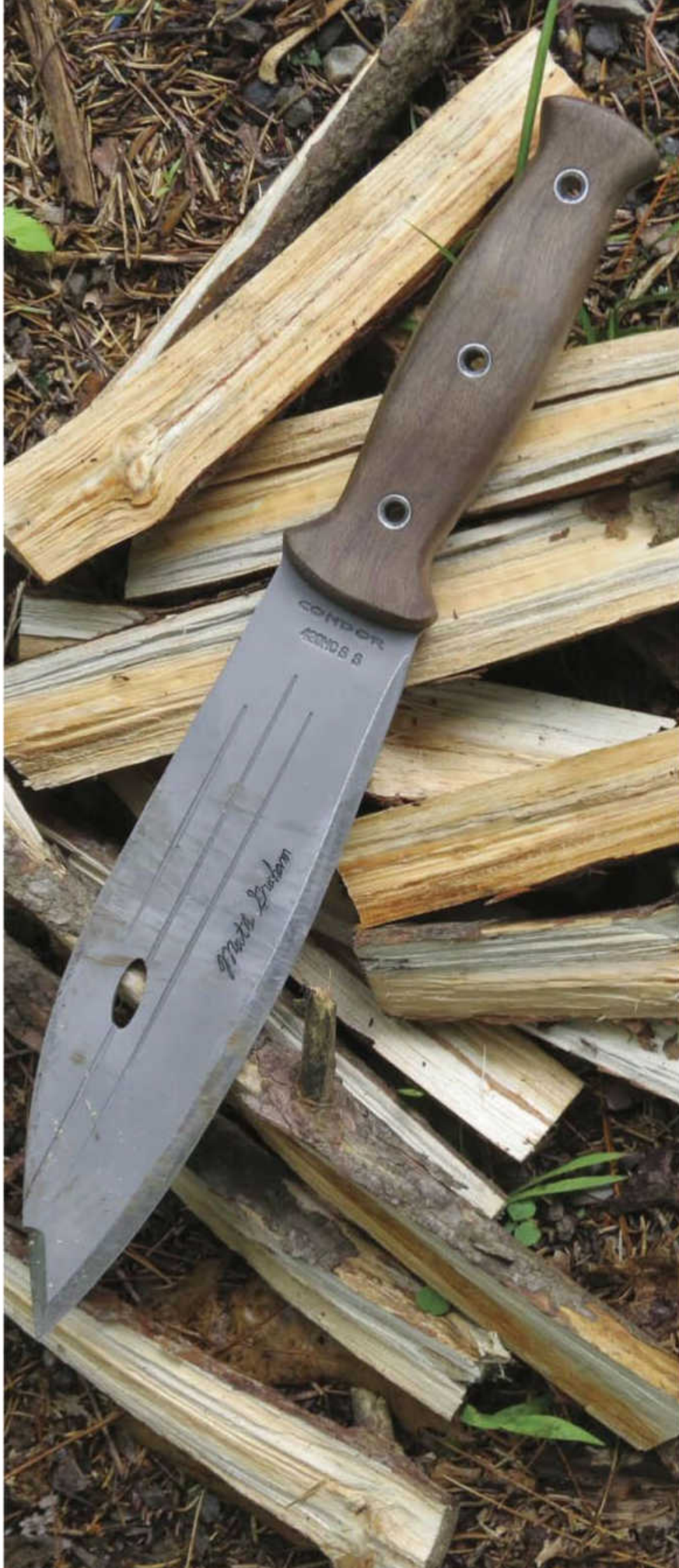
feels good in the hand. It's a symmetrical handle with palm swells that fit my hand well and works equally well in a conventional and saber grip or in an edge in reverse grip.

The pommel swell gives you a spot to hook your fingers on too if you want to choke back and get an extra couple of inches in length when chopping with snap cuts.

The Primitive Bush Knife comes with a sheath that's a departure from Condor's other excellent, heavy leather models. The Bush Knife comes with a more primitive looking sheath that suits the design well. Don't take the primitive comment as a negative though. The sheath itself is sturdily constructed of stout leather with a reinforcement band near the mouth of the sheath.



The Primitive Bush knife was plenty sturdy enough for batoning and fire wood prep.



"ITS SIMPLE DESIGN AND SLEEK BASIC SHEATH HAVE A CERTAIN NO FRILLS APPROACH THAT IS ALL ABOUT FUNCTION."

The Condor logo is tastefully stamped on this portion of the sheath, and a stiff leather tab extends just below it. There is no belt loop provided with this sheath. It's designed to simply be tucked behind your belt with the tab catching the top of your belt and holding the sheath in place, along with the tension from your belt. It's simple, works just fine and really goes with the theme of a simple bush tool. I like it a lot and hope to see Condor using similar on future knives.

In the Bush

I had a chance to work with the Primitive Bush Knife throughout the late spring and early summer. It was during this time that I started to appreciate the choice of 420HC over carbon steel. This has been one of the wettest summers on record in Western Pennsylvania, which is where I live, and things were in a constant state of high humidity when it wasn't outright storming.

I used the Bush knife in woods that were often soaked and heavily covered in mosses, fungus and soggy rotten logs. It made bush and camp craft a little tougher, as I was always on a quest for dry wood. I would use the Bush knife to cut low hanging dead branches under pine trees and had very good success using snap cuts on branches up to around finger-sized in diameter. Larger pieces of wood often needed batoned to reach the dry center so that I could get a fire burning well enough that it could dry out other, wetter pieces of fuel.



The Bush Knife uses a 420HC stainless steel blade with a satin finish and hand-polished edge.



A 5-inch symmetrical handle of Central American hardwood makes for a solid and comfortable grip on the Primitive Bush Knife.

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While not as heavy as some knives in the survival market, the Bush Knife made fast, efficient cuts and bit deep into dead saplings that the author used to construct a survival shelter.

"IT HAS A NICE, SHARP SPINE THAT THREW A TREMENDOUS SHOWER OF SPARKS OFF OF MY FERRO ROD ..."

The Bush Knife also worked great when it came to starting fires. It has a nice, sharp spine that threw a tremendous shower of sparks off of my Ferro rod, and it also worked well too as a scraper to make fine wood powder to use as tinder.

The hand polished Scandi edge was very good out of the box. It didn't quite shave hair, but it did bite into wood quite easily and proved to be a capable carver. It also held up well under all of the chopping and batoning I put it through. The tip has a good, sharp point to it and proved sturdy enough to stab into rotten logs and snap out sections of wood when digging for grubs or dry punk wood.

When it came to chopping, I felt that the Bush knife had enough mass to do a decent job of things even with its comparatively thin 3mm blade. It doesn't have the heft that some 3/16 or 1/4-inch field knives do, but it makes fast snap cuts and the speed and blade length make up to a large degree for the lighter weight. I found that I could choke back on the handle and gain a couple of extra inches when I needed to help the power of my cuts. I wouldn't try tacking down trees with it but even sapling up to a few inches around wouldn't be safe if you needed them to build a shelter.

When it came time for cleanup, I appreciated the fact that the Bush Knife was actually made from stainless steel rather than carbon steel. The knife was damp or downright wet most of the time I used it, yet it never exhibited any rust.

The blade got quite grimy digging in rotted logs and blackened from using a Ferro rod yet it cleaned up readily with some dish



The sharp spine of the Bush Knife worked extremely well with a Ferro rod. It also acted as a scraper to shave fine wood dust for use in fire starting.



soap and water. The water did raise the grain of the wood a bit and roughen it up, however. This was quickly rectified though by a rub down with fine steel wool then an application of boiled linseed oil to better protect the wood. I liked the way the oil brought out the grain in the wood too so it had a double effect of both protecting the handle and making it look good in the process.

The Final Word

Overall, I have to say that I was impressed with how the Primitive Bush Knife handled. It reminded me a lot of a solid American trade knife. Its simple design and sleek basic sheath have a certain no frills approach that is all about function.

At the same time, I found the whole package to be quite visually appealing. Both the lines of the knife and the style and build of the sheath are a departure from what you typically see in Western blades and that sets it apart from the rest of the bushcraft and survival field without taking anything away from the knife's functionality.

If you like checking out the hardware of your favorite TV celebrity, then picking up a primitive bush knife is a no brainer. Plus, if you like to have a fully capable field knife that's light enough to carry but performs big, then it makes even more sense to pick one up.

Keep an eye on Condor in the future too, because Matt Graham is signed up to do a full line of "Primitive Survival Series Tools," and I'm personally looking forward to see what they come up with next! **KI**



The tip of the Bush Knife held up well when digging in soggy, rotten logs while looking for grubs or digging for dry punk deeper into the wood.

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GHOST WARRIOR

GERBER'S GHOST STRIKE IS A
VERSATILE KNIFE THAT PERFORMS
WELL IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES

STORY BY CLINT THOMPSON
PHOTOS BY CLINT THOMPSON
AND DEANA ZNAMENACEK

**“THERE are three types of people in this world:
sheep, wolves and sheepdogs.”**

That line, which is from the recent blockbuster “American Sniper,” is a simplified explanation of society. During my professional lifetime as a law enforcement officer, I have seen all three of those types of people. The sheep are normal citizens who are nice, helpful and generally friendly. The wolves are the predators who are driven to harm others, and the sheepdogs are the police, military and citizens who — at great risk to themselves — are willing to step up and defend others. Those are the ghost warriors.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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Those warriors need proper and dependable tools, one of which is Gerber's Ghost Strike, a fixed-blade knife that has all the traits that can be used for offense, defense or as a tool.

What It's Got

The Ghost Strike is a well-designed and engineered fixed-blade knife that fit my medium-sized hand like a glove.

The knife, which is almost 7 inches long with a blade of almost 3 1/2 inches long, is very light.

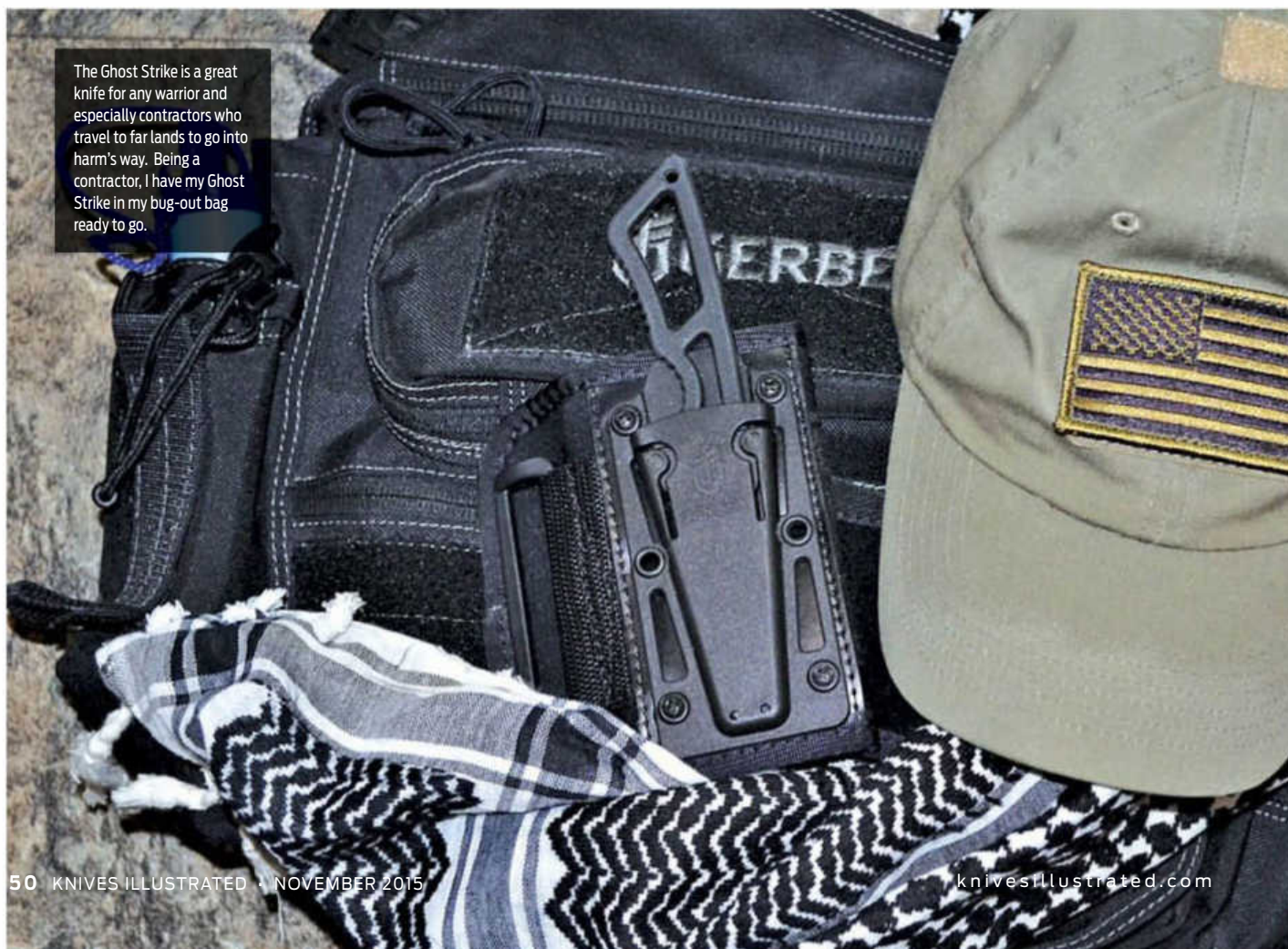
It is called the Ghost Strike because it was designed to be brought into action from concealment. As I carried it for several days

in the woods of Colorado, as well as on shopping trips in densely populated areas, it allowed me to be confident in where I was going and when I was going there.

The knife is designed to be carried vertically, horizontally, right- or left-handed, in the center of your back, on your side with the deluxe kit or on your ankle. Thus, I carried my sample every way it was designed to be carried, including in the ankle sheath.

The unique high-impact plastic sheath is designed to accept the blade either way you insert it. If you decide to carry this knife horizontally in the middle of your back, my favorite way, then you can insert the blade into the sheath with the cutting edge up or

The Ghost Strike is a great knife for any warrior and especially contractors who travel to far lands to go into harm's way. Being a contractor, I have my Ghost Strike in my bug-out bag ready to go.



down. When using the ankle sheath, a good method for warriors who work in an office, you can insert the blade with the edge facing forward or backward.

Real-World Test

As I am not a big fan of carrying firearms or knives on my ankle, I was curious to see if the Ghost Strike could be carried effectively, safely and without losing it while walking or running.

I can't help remembering the scene in the movie "The French Connection" when character Popeye, played by Gene Hackman, was wearing a Santa suit while chasing a suspect through the streets of New York. Popeye carried his subnose .38 caliber revolver in an ankle holster. There was no way in the mid-70s you could use an ankle holster and run after suspects. The holster would come

KNIFE HIGHLIGHTS

- Super light knife with ankle sheath
- Skeletal 420H steel handle with great rubber over-mold gripping
- Fast deployment of the Ghost Strike no matter where you carry it
- Unique sheath that can be worn right, left, horizontal, vertical, on your ankle at the right or left, inside or outside of the leg
- The Ghost Strike high-impact molded sheath will accept the knife no matter how you insert the blade



The Ghost Strike comes with a high-impact plastic sheath. In the deluxe model there is an additional ankle sheath holder.



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You can easily conceal the Ghost Strike by carrying it in the ankle sheath.



As shown, the Ghost Strike is easily carried on the ankle. I found it to be secure and very comfortable.

loose and orbit your lower leg, or worse, fly off and skid down the street.

For these reasons, I was interested in seeing how the Ghost Strike would carry on my ankle. I carried the knife in the ankle holster for three days, which included hiking, fishing and shopping in densely populated areas. I adjusted the ankle sheath snugly to my right ankle with the fixed blade knife on the outside of my leg. During this time, I wore standard jeans as I normally would. Within minutes after putting the ankle sheath and Ghost Strike in position on my leg, I forgot it was even there. The excellent design and padding, not too much or too little, made this type of carry very comfortable.

Fast Facts About GERBER

1 Gerber was founded in 1939 and is based in Portland, Oregon, USA.

2 Gerber is an American brand whose products are sold around the world.

3 Many U.S. military personnel carry Gerber knives and tools. While in Iraq serving as an International police advisor, I found many military personnel carrying Gerber knives and tools. Numerous contractors like myself also carried Gerber products.

SPECIFICATIONS

BLADE LENGTH: 3.3 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 6.9 inches

BLADE STEEL: 420HC

HANDLE MATERIAL: Rubber over-molded glass-filled nylon

WEIGHT: 3.6 ounces (with sheath), 6.0 ounces with the ankle sheath added

I highly recommend this knife to those warriors who work in offices or warehouses and to the brother and sister sheepdog law enforcement officers who would like a backup knife.

Carried Many Ways

While carrying the Ghost Strike, I found it to be a handy tool to have around. It certainly got the job done while I was fishing, as I used it to cut line and to cut willows that got in my way, including one rogue willow that insisted it was going to eat my hook and bait. I even used it to gut and clean a nice-sized trout I caught despite the rogue willow's crazed attempts.

While in the dense willow patch engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the willow tree demon, I looked down at my vanquished foe and saw the print of the foreleg of a large black bear. My Ghost Strike gave me some feeling of confidence as I retreated to a safer area.

Winning Design

Gerber has hit on a winning design with the Ghost Strike.

It can be used by warriors for duty, personal protection, as a tool for hunting and fishing and as physical support for peace of mind. I highly recommend this knife ... whether you are a sheep or sheepdog. **KI**

TIPS FOR USERS

- 1 Always keep the Ghost Strike clean and sharp.
- 2 Never use the Ghost Strike to open cardboard boxes or heavy paper envelopes. Any knife will become dull when used as a utility knife.
- 3 If you clean game with your Ghost Strike, as I do, just throw it in the sink and wash it with your kitchen knives. Be careful when removing this very sharp knife from the dish water. Dry it off and coat it with a premium gun oil.
- 4 Always treat the Ghost Strike, as any knife or firearm, with respect and keep it out of reach of children.

"I BELIEVE GERBER HAS
HIT ON A WINNING
DESIGN WITH THE
GHOST STRIKE."



The Ghost Strike is a straightforward fixed blade knife that is light and comfortable to handle.

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THAT DESCRIPTION FITS BOTH
E.J. SNYDER AND HIS TOPS SXB KNIFE

BY DOUG JEFFREY
PHOTOS COURTESY OF DISCOVERY
AND E.J. SNYDER

HE calls it ogre mode.

If you're unfamiliar with it, think of an NFL running back going through, around and over the defense. That's the type of unparalleled intensity that he brings to every project he does. His setting is always on high, and his goal is always victory, regardless of the game.

He is 49-year-old E.J. "Skullcrusher" Snyder, a survivalist, a father, a husband, U.S. Army retired, a knife expert and one of the stars of "Naked and Afraid."



KNIVES FIRST

Q You grew up in a tough neighborhood, but you found the outdoors quickly.

A Believe it or not, I grew up in some tough Italian neighborhoods in North Jersey. My dad used to take my kid brother and me out camping, fishing, hunting and trapping in the woods and marshes most weekends. My love for the outdoors and need to escape the concrete jungle was strong, so my kid brother and I found ourselves looking for the woods or water somewhere and spending a lot of time outside.

Q How did you get interested in knives?

A My dad gave me my first folding Buck hunting knife as a kid, which in those days was a right of passage to being accepted into the hunter's fold of my dad and uncles.

Q What did you carry in the military?

A I was an in-your-face and "lead by example" type leader. I was always leading from the front, because it's the only way I knew. I was a dedicated, high work ethic soldier. I wanted to be the very best I could be for the country, the Army and those I led.

Combat taught me a lot about surviving and tough days. I learned quickly that hard times don't last but hard men do. So I worked hard every day to become a very hardened individual physically, mentally and spiritually. Whatever you throw at me, no matter how hard, I would be tough enough to endure it.

I went to many schools and attended every leadership level of academy training from primary to executive level, but the most impactful for me was Ranger School, where I participated in SERE (Army Survival School).

All these schools exposed me to a lot of formal survival training or needed skills. They are what lit my fire into expanding my own personal survival skillset.

I carried a Bowie on my hip and a machete on my back most of my career. When we lightened our loads with better gear to move farther and faster by foot, I realized ounces equals pounds and pounds equal misery. I went to a lighter combat fighting knife, most of the time, a K-Bar. Yeah, I know

the RESUME

NAME

E.J. Snyder

AGE

49

OCCUPATION

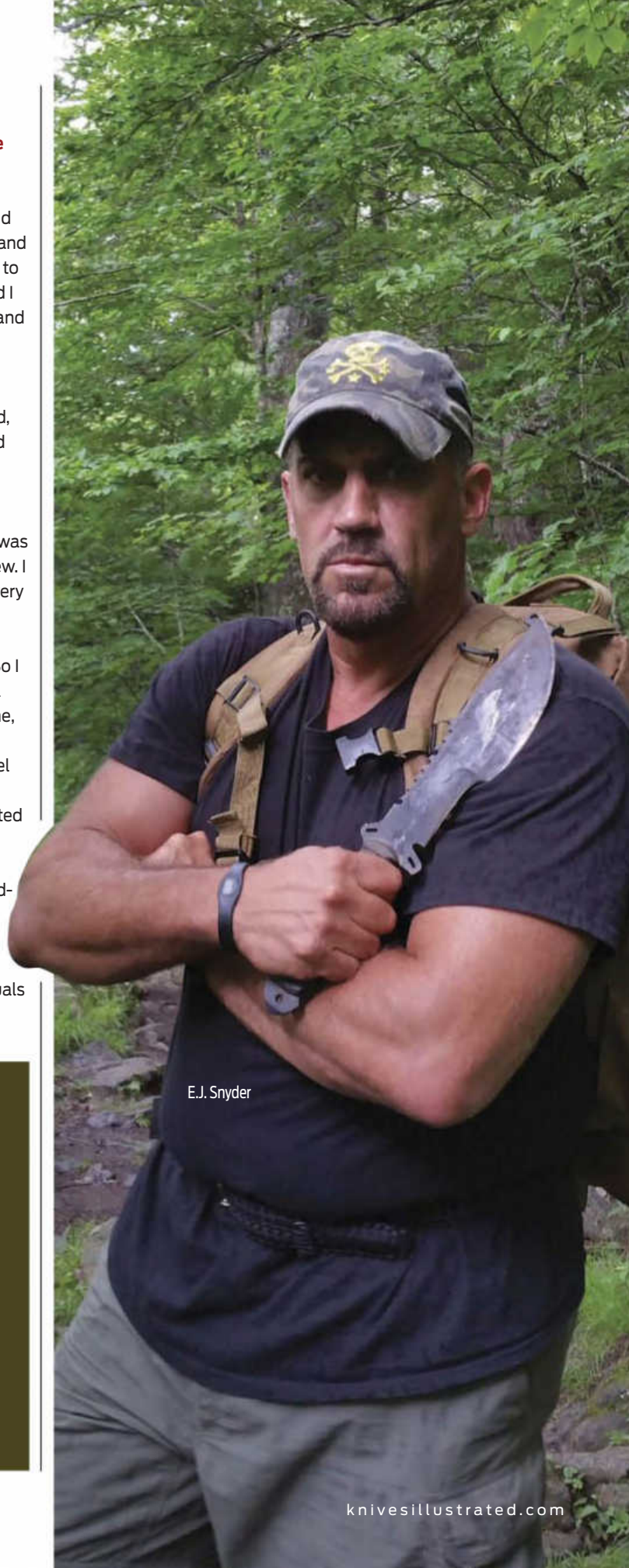
Actor, government contract survival instructor for the Army, extreme survivalist and adventurer

MILITARY

Retired 25-year Army combat vet; served in the 1991 Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom; highly decorated; retired at the rank of Sergeant Major and was in the infantry, leading soldiers most of that time in airborne, mountain, and light infantry units in Ranger coded positions

FAMILY

Married for 23 years to Ang; two children; and a black lab named Maylea



E.J. Snyder



Skullcrusher's Xtreme knife has a blade length of 10 3/8 inches.

THOUGHTS ON WEIGHT

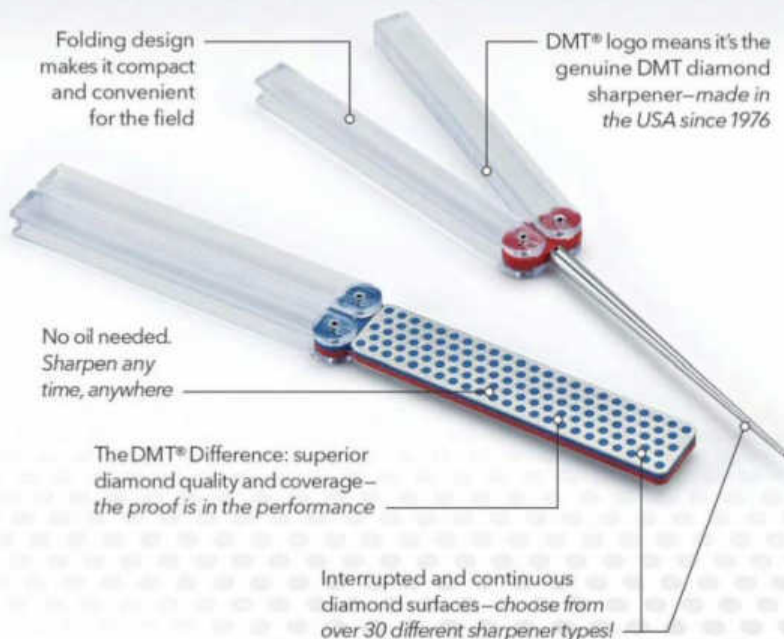
Anyone who judges someone's success of a survival show based on weight loss doesn't really know much about survival. I always try to put on extra fat going in so I have a good reserve to work off of to sustain me longer out there.

Muscle burns quicker than fat and releases toxins more rapidly into the blood stream that effect your decision making processes.

I also believe that we all have a primal survival weight (PSW) that no matter how much weight you put on or don't have, you are going to hit that mark, as long as you are eating like a caveman and not actually starving. If you go thin and close to your PSW, then guess what, you aren't going to lose much.

I ate rather well out there outside of Tanzania and lost a tremendous amount of weight each time, getting down to my PSW each time. I do not see myself as a failure.

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K-Bars are for Marines, but I think I must have been a “Devil Dog” in a former life because I like them.

Q Why did you end up with TOPS?

A When I was in Tanzania [for “Naked and Afraid”], about 10 days into the 21-day challenge, my knife broke. At 10 days in with 11 to go, that’s not a great feeling! It was my fault though. I was being very tough on the knife and probably not using it with its manufactured parameters, but for me ... that’s just not acceptable.



The SXB weighs in at 26 ounces.

When I got back from that challenge, I started a quest to find the one survival knife that could be as rugged, tough and dependable as I was.

I tested over 25 different types of blades, spent countless hours with five custom knife-making buddies about the art of knife making, studied the make-up and types of steel, and spoke with hundreds of knife enthusiasts, survivalists and outdoorsmen about what they liked and wanted in knives.

I quickly realized that the knife I was looking for to fit my need didn’t exist, so I was going to have to design it. I came up with a concept based on who I am, what I do and where I came from. I wanted to get back to a bigger knife like I used to carry ... something like a Bowie but more modern.

I needed it to be a good fighting knife to handle the battlefield, and it needed to be able to perform many survival-type tasks needed to be done in the wild.

I never wanted to be a knife maker myself, but I needed to understand the pain I was about to put some poor knife maker through, and that’s why I put all my spirit,

blood, sweat, tears and research into my design of the SXB: Skullcrusher’s Xtreme Blade. I knew extreme situations require an extreme blade, and I needed one that I could count on ... not only to survive the wild but the battlefield.

Q How do you test a knife?

A I get a knife in my hand, and I personally go right to it. I put it through the paces and rigors, and I am very hard and tough on things. I try hard to evoke my will on the blade. While I put it to normal tasks, I do them as hard as I can to ensure it doesn’t break. I need to know when I am out there in a tough spot that I can count on my knife to go the distance. Finding out in the middle of the situation that it can’t, is the wrong time for that to happen. That is, unless, you are me, because I believe there is always one more thing you can do. I am a die-hard, and I just will never give up.

SURVIVAL SECOND

Q How did you get into survivalism?

A When I got into the U.S. Army, I was ex-



TOPS and E.J. Snyder collaborated on the project.



KNIFE SPECS

THE KNIFE: SXB (Skullcrusher's Xtreme Blade)

OVERALL LENGTH: 16 3/4 inches

BLADE LENGTH: 10 3/8 inches

CUTTING EDGE: 9 3/4 inches

THICKNESS: 1/4 inch

BLADE COLOR: Black Traction

STEEL: 1095 High Carbon

HANDLE: Black Linen Micarta

WEIGHT: 26 oz (knife only)

DESIGNED BY: E.J. Snyder

posed to formal survival training. It quickly became a passion of mine, and I started a dedicated self-study of the art of survival.

I am very uncomfortable when folks use the term "expert," especially when associated with "survival." I am a military expert and feel very comfortable saying that. While I think you can become a master at many of the skills in survival, there are so many — and in different areas — that you could probably study a lifetime and never master them all to be considered a true survival expert.

I am better than most at some things and not quite as good at others, so for me, I want to be a total survivalist and try to master it on every level and in every form so I can be the best I can be. It's a lot, but I will keep trying until the day I meet my maker.

Q With whom have you trained, and do you continue to work on your skills?

A I was formerly trained in survival by the U.S. Army through various schools and courses, but most of the training came through their official Survival School. It is the foundation of my skill set and is why I went back after I retired from the military to teach, because I felt it was that important.

the
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"I LEARNED QUICKLY THAT HARD TIMES DON'T LAST BUT HARD MEN DO."



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The sheath is a black ballistic nylon with a Molle backing.

I pride myself in being that guy that can go into any bad situation with very little and make it better, as well as get others out too! You never know when a survival situation is going to pop up or with whom or what you may find yourself with.

I always go into these situations with what I know, an iron will, and whatever I got and shift into my ogre mode of survival. My motto is "Tua Sponte Superstes," which means survive by your own will and give it all you got. If I can't go over it, around it, or under it ... look out! Because I am going right through it!

I have also a vast network of close friends in the survival community and military. We get together all the time and work and learn from each other to help improve and expand our skill sets. These are guys like Clint Jivoine, Chris Swanda, Jamie Burliegh, to name a few.



Snyder's quest for a knife started in Africa while in the midst of a 21-day survival challenge on "Naked and Afraid."

FINALLY: "NAKED AND AFRAID"

Q Why did you want to be on the show?

A Initially, Discovery had me try out for "Dual Survival." The plan was for me to replace one of the co-hosts. They obviously liked me, but I was not the right fit for what they were looking for at the time. So I waited awhile and even ran TNT's Survival Adventure Race "72 hours" in Fiji before Discovery called me again.

They said they had a new ground-breaking survival series that had never been attempted and that it was going to be the Everest of survival challenges. They asked if I wanted in.

Without hesitation, I said, "Absolutely!"

Not knowing a single thing about what I was really heading into, I was intrigued and wanted in. I knew it was going to be what I was looking for ... a real test of my outdoor and survival abilities.

What I didn't realize is that it was going to test me so much more. It tested me also as a man, a warrior and a leader. It was the most physically, mentally, spiritually and emotional test of my life. God and I were about to come to terms.

Q How do you prepare for this show physically and mentally?

A When I find out where I am going, I do an area study. In the military, I focused on the enemy, targets, terrain and resources. Going into a survival challenge isn't much different. On many levels, I try to gain as much information about where I am going as I can. This gives us the best chance of success.

When I get with a situation like what happened in the Amazon, I may not get as much chance to study and succeed. So mentally, I am always studying, going back to my survival manuals and practicing.

Physically, I try to stay fit for life so I train every day in the gym, in the woods, and I hike, swim and do any physical activity that I can do to stay in shape and do the tasks in the wild I will need to do.

Q Which is more important on the show: physical or mental strength?

A Mental strength. I believe survival is 90% mental and 10% physical, but don't get me wrong. The physical aspect is important, and you are going to need it, but a strong will can get you through any tough situation in life.

Q What knife do you use on the show, and where would you be without it?

A My first knife, which shall remain nameless, broke. It was a good one; I was just tough on it. We would have been in a tough spot if it totally would have shattered, but we still managed to make do with it.

The second knife we had, which is when I was in the Amazon, came from Diving Sparrow. My good friend Abe Elias made it. That knife is a nice and wickedly surgical-edged Parang type.

In "XL," I put my SXB prototype through its final 40-day test. I had been beating it up for about four months prior, and I was ready for her to do her thing. I could not have designed or asked for a better blade. It did everything I asked of it and then some. It performed every single survival task with ease, filleted our meals with ease, chopped down half the jungle and took one helluva beating ... and it kept its good edge throughout. It was very impressive, and I can't wait for the world to see it in action.

**HOW TO FOLLOW,
HOW TO REACH**

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Q How difficult is it to go the full 21 days?

A It is no game, there is no big prize money waiting at the end, there is no voting anyone out and no grand trophy to raise at the end. It's just you, your partner, your individually selected items and your skill set against one hostile environment: Mother Nature.

It is not for the feint of heart or for someone who is just looking for something to challenge himself. If that's what you are looking for, go run a race or something, because out there, you have to know what you are doing. Your partner is counting on you for that, just like you are in reverse, to help keep each other alive and make it to extraction.

It was one of the most difficult things I have ever done in my life, and I have done some tough stuff. In the end, it was all worth it, because each time I come out a better and changed man, a more evolved survivalist, a better leader, and a better outlook on life, which is really the most important part to me.



Snyder used his knife on the 40-day survival challenge on "Naked and Afraid."

Q Your partner, Laura Zerra, is one of the best looking ladies on the show, and she wasn't exactly dressed like she would be on a first date.

A I didn't actually notice because with prides of lions all around, packs of hyenas, anacondas, caimans lurking, Fer-de-Lances waiting in ambush ... you just simply don't have time for that nonsense.

The bottom line is I looked at all my partners the way they looked at me ... another survival tool and resource for me to use. And I hope they got their s**t together. **KI**

What's In A Name?

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It's the company that makes sure the tolerances are tight.

It's the company that makes sure the product is safe.

It's the company that takes care of it's customers after the sale

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the “Starting” Five

5 TOP EVERY DAY CARRIES

BY ABE ELIAS
PHOTOS COURTESY OF
THE MANUFACTURERS

AND you thought you had to wait a year to see what's new.

It used to be we got new knife releases once a year, usually around SHOT Show time. Now, with all the companies out there and the large number of innovators making knives, new releases are popping up all year long. If you are not paying attention, you just might miss your next favorite Every Day Carry (EDC).

Selecting just five is a lot of work, but I think I have some knives that beckon to be picked up and handled. This spread of knives ranges through a number of categories ... tactical to workhorse, large to midsize and plain Jane to all dressed up.

Best of all, this list has a couple that no one has seen yet, so you are getting to see them here first. That's right ... two pre-releases.

This group leans a little toward the large size, but it does present a nice variety of different looks and materials, which gives us a good choice for whatever work we want to put these knives to.

The wait ends now.

ON THE WEB

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www.SteelWillKnives.com

CRKT

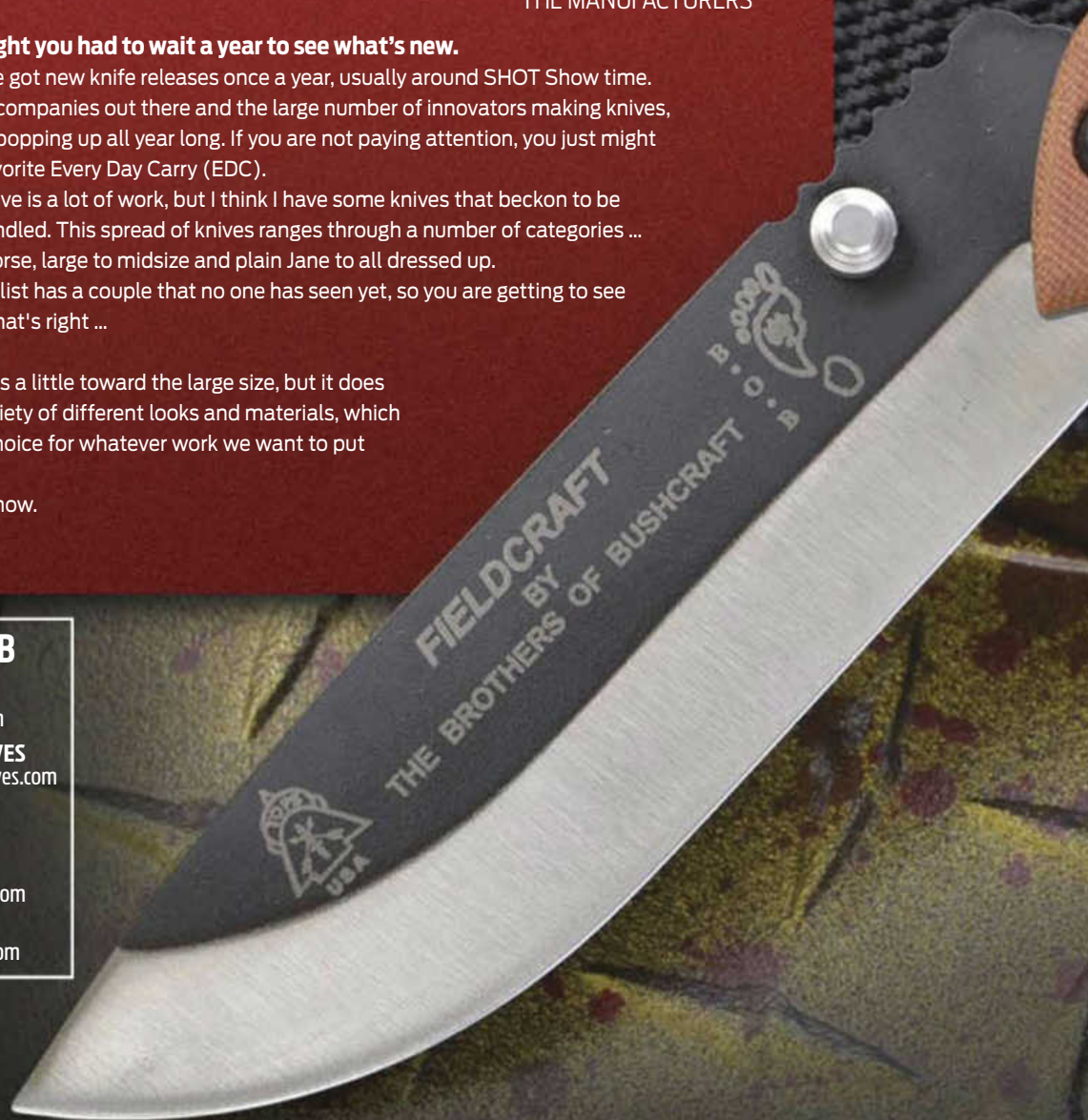
www.CRKT.com

TOPS

www.TOPSKnives.com

GERBER

www.GerberGear.com





1 COMPANY TOPS

MODEL Brother of Bushcraft Folder (B.O.B.)

DESIGNER Brothers of Bushcraft

Their B.O.B. fixed blade is very popular so it makes sense they would make a B.O.B. folder. Did I mention that I hate names that are acronyms? Truthfully, that would be my only reason not to make a B.O.B. folder, and that, of course, is no reason at all.

The overall length of the knife is 9.75 inches, and the blade length is 4.5 inches. Closed, the knife measures 5.38 inches. If you ever wondered what constitutes a large folder, this would be it. It is built and bred to see dirt time.

This is one of our sneak peek knives, so the blade steel for the knife is yet to be decided. So far TOPS seems to be leaning toward stainless steel. The scales will be tan canvas Micarta, and the locking system will be a liner lock.

To carry this large folder, they provide a pocket clip for either side carry, making the knife ambidextrous. Whichever material they decide on for the blade they are going to be covering it in black cerakote.

A unique feature will be the bow drill divot on one side of the knife. Granted, it is large for a folder, but it will be more of an outdoors EDC for those who want one.

SPECS

BLADE LENGTH: 4.5 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 9.75 inches

STEEL: 1095 Carbon, 56-58 HRC

HANDLE: Brown canvas Micarta

WEIGHT: 14.4 ounces

PRICE: \$180

Weighing in at less than 15 ounces, the TOPS Brother of Bushcraft Folder (B.O.B.) goes for \$180.

"... IT LOOKS LIKE A KNIFE THAT SHOULD COST MORE, AS IT IS VERY SLEEK AND CLEAN."

2 **COMPANY** CRKT **MODEL** Get S**T Done (G.S.D.) **DESIGNER** Liong Mah

I picked the CRKT G.S.D. for two reasons. First, I am often reminded I need to "Get S**T Done." Second, because it looks like a knife three times its cost. I love a good clean design, but I often find the price tag on some knives can be up there, which is why I think I was adopted; my family was poor, and I have expensive taste.

The closed length on the G.S.D. is 4.3 inches. It has a blade length of 3.32 inches and an overall length of 7.6 inches. The blade is a drop point profile hollow ground from AUS 8. Snicker if you must, but I have had and still have plenty of good knives with AUS 8 as the blade steel.

The handle is also made of stainless steel, but it has a stonewashed finish. Presentation wise, it looks like a titanium handle. The angles on the handle and the grind of the blade make for a sleek appearance.

As for the action, it is a frame lock system, and it opens like the blade is on ice. You can switch the pocket clip for tip up carry on either side so you have an ambidextrous knife.

Like I said, it looks like a knife that should cost more, as it is very sleek and clean. I like the package. I would have to like it a lot, because I normally don't like typing one letter then a period and so on when it comes to names.



The CRKT G.S.D. knife is sleek and clean.

SPECS

BLADE LENGTH: 3.32 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.69 inches
BLADE THICKNESS: 0.12 inches
STEEL: AUS8
HANDLE: 420J2 stainless steel
LOCK TYPE: Frame lock
PRICE: \$99.99

3 **COMPANY** Gerber **MODEL** Premium Gator Series

The Gator folder has been Gerber's most popular knife since it was launched in 1991, and the company is now set to launch its new Gator

Premium Series. You will recognize the series origins, but the look has been stepped up. The series will have both a fixed blade and folding knife so let's look at the folder.

The overall length is 8.6 inches, and the blade length is 3.6 inches. Blade steel will be CPM S30V, and the grind will be hollow. For the handle, they will go with glass-filled nylon with Gator grip over mold. To add a little to the appearance, they will also be using steel bolsters instead of a full Gator over mold handle.

Like the original, Gerber will be providing a pouch sheath.

It will be interesting to see how the new Gator line catches on. It has been available since August, and the expected MSRP is a \$121.



The Gerber Premium Gator Series came out earlier this year.

SPECS

BLADE LENGTH: 3.6 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 8.5 inches
STEEL: CPM S30V
HANDLE: Glass-filled nylon
WEIGHT: 4.8 ounces
PRICE: \$121

4 **COMPANY** Spyderco **MODEL** Positron **DESIGNER** Brad Southard

For those of you who don't know how it works with Spyderco, let me loop you in. Spyderco brings a group of prototypes to shows, where they display them in a showcase. They draw from a wide field of makers and innovative designs, and Sal Glesser, the founder of Spyderco, tends the display cabinet and takes in all the feedback. Thus, if you have ever wondered why they come out with so many winning designs, there you have it. They have a solid ear to the ground. Hence, the Positron.

Designed by Brad Southard, the Positron is a midsize EDC. It measures 3.97 inches closed and has a 3.01-inch long blade. The blade is made from CPM S30V and features a full flat grind. Scale material is carbon fiber. Imbedded into the carbon fiber scales is a stainless steel skeletonized frame. A ball-bearing pivot point gives the Positron its super easy open glide. I picked the design because it is simple, clean and crisp.

A usable EDC can have looks; in the end, however, it needs to be functional. The no nonsense approach to the overall design just makes it flow. Also, what's there not to like about a full flat grind?



SPECS

BLADE LENGTH: 3.01 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 6.98 inches
CLOSED LENGTH: 3.97 inches
BLADE THICKNESS: 0.118 inches
BLADE MATERIAL: CPM S30V stainless steel
HANDLE MATERIAL: Carbon fiber
LOCKING MECHANISM: Liner lock
WEIGHT: 2.6 ounces
PRICE: \$279.95

"THE NO NONSENSE APPROACH TO THE OVERALL DESIGN JUST MAKES IT FLOW."

5 COMPANY Steel Will MODEL Gekko 1500

Some of you scratching your head and thinking, "Steel Will"?

Yes they are new but, they have hit the ground running. They already have an extensive line of fixed blades, and they are moving rapidly into the folder arena.

For this list, I picked the Gekko 1500. Its clean geometric appearance caught my eye. Plus, it comes in on the large side for those who like their EDCs large.

Closed, it measures 4.89 inches; the overall length is 8.98 inches. The blade is a flat ground drop point style blade with false grind, and it is made of N690Co.

The handle material is Micarta. The pocket clip has only one position, which is tip up, but they have it set up for ambidextrous carry.

To keep the blade locked, they use a lock back system. The blade has a satin finished, and the Micarta has a textured finish to it. The contouring of the scales has various facets giving it a geometric look. The facets also provide platforms for control. It has a clean look, but it is not so polished that you couldn't work that knife for every inch. **KI**



The geometric appearance of Steel Will's Gekko 1500 caught the author's eye.

SPECS

BLADE LENGTH: 3.94 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 8.98 inches

BLADE THICKNESS: 0.14 inches

STEEL: N690Co

HANDLE: Micarta

LOCK TYPE: Lockback

PRICE: \$229.99

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CUTLERY 101

10 TIPS FOR THE BEGINNER KNIFE ENTHUSIAST

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GRAY LAFLEUR

GETTING your foot in the door of the knife world is a real learning process, especially during modern times.

I'm in my mid-40's, and I believe my generation was the last to enjoy the fun of BB guns, pocket knives and slingshots while growing up. We're at a point now where a kid can't walk down the sidewalk without someone trying to strap a helmet to his head, never mind enjoying the simple pleasure of a game of mumbly peg. I think this translated into a little more knowledge and experience about these types of things when we became adults than what the later generations had.

With that in mind, we thought it might be helpful to provide some tips for beginner knife enthusiasts.

"ONCE YOU'RE DONE USING YOUR KNIFE ... CLEAN IT AND PUT A LIGHT COATING OF OIL ON IT TO STAVE OFF CORROSION."





TIPS to Consider

1 Decide What You Want

First, give some real consideration to exactly why you want to buy a knife. Do you just want an everyday pocket knife? Or, are you looking for something more specific such as a hunting knife, a fighting knife, a knife for bushcraft, or maybe one to act as a last resort, do-all survival knife? Each type has specific characteristics that lend themselves well for a particular specific use.

The Benchmade Jungle Clip-Point is an example of a large knife that can be used in the woods for chopping, clearing brush, and processing firewood. The street price is a reasonable \$106.



HIGH VS. LOW RANGE

LOW
\$20 to \$35
MIDDLE
\$75 to \$125
HIGH
\$125 and above

2 Check Your Local Laws and Rules

Before you run out and buy one, check your local and state laws where you plan to use and/or carry the knife. Some states have a limit on the blade length for folding knives, and others don't allow open carry of fixed blades except in specific areas.

If you plan on doing outdoors activities, you might check with the parks and forests (some are private) to see what their rules are. I remember taking several hiking trips through Grandfather Mountain Park, and they didn't allow knives with blades longer than six inches at the time. It's important to do this at the beginning so you don't waste time looking over knives that won't comply with local laws or rules.



The Buck Knives Selkirk survival knife is an example of a use-specific knife that can be had in the \$50 price range.



3 Do Your Homework

Become knowledgeable about the area of the type of knife you want to buy and use. There's a world of experience and knowledge at your fingertips right on the Internet. Join forums that are dedicated to your specific area of interest, whether it's bushcraft, survival skills, hunting knives or tactical blades. Not only will you learn what style of knife is best for your need, you might also get a lead on a particular brand or model.

Once you get a lead on an item, read all the reviews online that you can find on different sites to see if other users' experiences are positive overall. As you spend more time on the forums, you'll learn which members' opinions to trust based on the homework you've done.

4 Become a Steel Connoisseur

Start learning about different steel types and for what applications they are best used. For example, O1 and 1095 are high-carbon steels known for their utility in the outdoors and their ease of sharpening in the field. Other steels such as CPM S35VN are tougher to sharpen, but hold their edge much longer and are highly corrosion resistant. Or, for blades that handle impact, you can look into steels such as CPM 3V or S7.

Most of the steel manufacturers have data sheets on each of their steels that list their chemical formulas and describe the steel's characteristics. Naturally, the real learning comes by experimenting with different types of blades, and that can be achieved by participating in the pass-around groups in some forums, or by borrowing knives from friends.



The Benchmade SOCP fighting knife is a dedicated self-defense knife that offers a strong value for under \$90.



The ESEE Junglas is an example of a fantastic chopping knife for the woods, and it's an excellent value at \$179 street price when you consider the great factory Kydex sheath you get for that price.

5 Factor in the Sheath

If done correctly, leather sheaths are the author's preference over other materials. The leather sheaths from Hedgehog Leatherworks are some of the very best high quality sheaths on the market.

One thing that is often overlooked during the buying process is whether a sheath is included, and if so, what quality is it? Though there are a few manufacturers that provide excellent sheaths with their knives, most fixed blades come with a generic type of sheath that might be usable, but may not be durable or a great fit. You may have to consider factoring in additional money to have your own custom sheath made if the one from the factory doesn't meet muster.

6 Get the Best Value You Can

A big factor that will play into your decision-making process is price. Part of the trick to finding those good values includes the prior research we did on the best steels for the job, and brands and models that were recommended by others. Talking strictly about fixed blades (in street prices), depending on what you're looking for, you can start out in the \$20-\$35 range with Mora Knives and similar offerings.

Stepping up to the \$50-\$75 range opens the door to a lot more options, including hunting knives, field knives and basic fighting knives like the Benchmade SOCP. A lot of knives in this price range are going to be made of entry-level steels like 420HC, 440C and AUS-8. For a hunting knife, the classic Buck 119 is available for right at \$50, and the Buck Selkirk survival knife is \$50 as well.

In the \$75 to \$125 range, you really have an opportunity to acquire some of the hottest, best-value knives on the market that incorporate better materials such as higher-grade steels and better handle materials as well. In this range, you're able to acquire strong performance blades from companies like Benchmade, ESEE, KA-BAR, CRKT, DPx Gear, SOG, Gerber, Spyderco, Steel Will, TOPS Knives and many others.

Of course, above \$125, the sky's the limit. You can get custom knives made from the latest super steels, with the best handle materials, and from the experienced hands of well-known and in-demand knife makers. You just have to pay to play.

The Chris Reeve Pacific is a high-end knife at around \$325, but it incorporates the latest materials including CPM S35VN steel and is skillfully designed by master craftsmen. The combination of the Pacific and its leather sheath would be a great all-around knife for survival use including bushcraft tasks and self-defense work.





Kydex sheaths are rugged, stand up to the elements, and are very configurable. This Kydex sheath, made by Red Hills Sheaths, works with a Tek-Lok that can be oriented for vertical or horizontal carry, and it can be set up with a left- or right-handed draw.

7 Maintain the Edge

One important thing to make a habit of is keeping your knives sharp. You have a greater chance of being cut by a dull knife because a dull edge makes the individual work too hard and requires too much pressure, often resulting in accidents.

There are many ways that people sharpen knives. There are ceramic sticks like those you would find in the Spyderco Sharp-maker. Some folks use computer mouse pads with different grits of sandpaper to develop a convex edge. Still others use whetstones, Japanese water stones or diamond encrusted stones like you might find on Lansky's multiple-angle sharpening system.

An old school method is using wide strips of leather, or long leather strops with or without rubbing compounds to sharpen an edge. No matter your choice, you will need to spend a good amount of time practicing your technique to get the desired sharpness on a consistent basis.

8 Take Care of Your Tools

My grandfather gave me my first shotgun when I was six, and he also gave me my first knife. He was a simple man, and he had just one basic rule. Take care of your tools, and your tools will take care of you. When it comes to knives, that expression means you should clean them and store them properly.

High-carbon steel knives are more likely to rust, and they can rust in places you wouldn't think possible. Once you're done using your knife for the day or for the weekend, clean it and put a light coating of oil on it to stave off corrosion. Most companies also advise not to store a knife in a leather sheath for a long time, as leather tends to absorb moisture and can facilitate the corrosion process.

It's actually a good idea to do with all your knives, including the "stainless" ones. I've seen stainless knives start to corrode, and if you get in the habit of cleaning and oiling every knife, it'll become second nature to you. Then, you won't have to think about which knife needs the treatment or not.

WHERE TO BUY KNIVES, PURCHASING ADVICE

1 WHERE: Stores

NOTE: Charging MSRP could mean you're paying double

3 WHERE: eBay

NOTE: Look for a minimum of 5,000 feedbacks and 99.5% positive reviews

2 WHERE: Amazon

NOTE: As a prime member, you get free two-day shipping

4 WHERE: Online Knife Stores

NOTE: Visit sites like Knife Center and Knives Ship Free and read user reviews



The Wolverine knife, designed in the style of Finnish Puukos by Kellam Knives, has a high-carbon steel blade and a comfortable birch handle, and offers a lot of value with an old-world looks and craftsmanship for just around \$129.



Mora Knives have a large following because of the performance they offer in knives that range from \$20-\$40. They aren't built for chopping or prying, but as cutting implements, they are excellent performers, not to mention lightweight and easy to carry. The Swedish Military uses one of their models that retails for around \$35 (US).

9 Dealing with a Custom Maker

The thing I enjoy about dealing with custom knife makers is that a lot of them have an old-school frame of mind. They believe that a man's word is his bond, and a handshake is more binding than 50 signatures. However, as with any generation, a few bad apples get in the mix, and we'd like to offer a little advice on how a transaction should work.

First, if you're new to knives, make sure you want to spend the money to have a custom knife made as one of your first blade purchases — especially if you're not very knowledgeable about the different types and styles, their intended uses and the best materials for the job.

Second, spend time on the forums and read the feedback that everyone else is posting about a maker. You'll have to weed out trolls, but the Net is a great place to get good information about the best makers.

Finally, never pay for the knife up front. That's right. There are too many stories of people paying for a knife, and the maker disappearing into the ether. The most I would pay is a 15-20% deposit if a dealer asks for it. If the knife maker is good and has a strong reputation, he'll have plenty of people in line willing to buy the knife you requested to be made, especially if you've paid the price down a bit. But, never pay the entire price up front. Wait until the job is finished.

Now, there's an exception to that rule. If you want \$10,000 worth of jewels decorating the knife, that's an extraordinary request. If you'd like the handle to be made out of T-Rex bone, that's a bit unusual as well. If you're having a knife made that requires a special materials purchase by the maker, it's perfectly reasonable for them to have you pay that money up front in addition to the deposit, so you should then get out your credit card and pay them.

That said, you'll find that many makers have enough business that they won't even ask for a deposit on your custom knife, because they know someone else will buy it.

10 Learn Where to Buy Knives

If you're not well-heeled enough for the custom stuff, chances are that you're probably going to be buying a production knife in the \$25 to \$150 range at most. I might be wrong, but that's what I'm guessing. In that case, just about the only smart choice is to buy online.

I'm all for supporting local stores, but most of the time, they charge MSRP, which is sometimes almost double the price for a knife. There are all kinds of sites online to order knives from that charge far less than MRSP. Compare prices, and make sure to take shipping into account.

If you do a lot of shopping on Amazon, you may already have a Prime Membership, which gives you free two-day shipping on items. I've bought several mainstream knives on Amazon because they had the best price and I got the free shipping.

I know eBay gets a bad rap sometimes, but you just have to be careful who you're dealing with. My prerequisite for buying from a vendor is for them to have at least 5,000 feedbacks with no less than 99.5% positive reviews. There are several storefronts that have over 20,000+ ratings with 100% positive reviews, so they're not hard to find. Look for suspicious listings. If someone is selling a personal knife, but they show a stock photo, that should be a red flag in the digital camera age. Just remember that if it's too good to be true, then it probably is. **KI**



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STORY BY LES ROBERTSON
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“WHY don’t you sell these?”

Chris Conaway heard that question enough times that he finally took it to heart, and he decided to take that step. His journey into the world of custom knives all began with his trips to the outdoors.

He started by making knives for himself. After he had finished his prized possessions, he showed some of them to family and friends, which is when he started hearing the magical question.

He started off with selling fixed blades, but in 2012, after meeting Lance Abernathy of Sniper Blade Works, that changed. Lance showed him the ins and outs of making folders, and Chris took it from there.

COIC XL

BLADE LENGTH: 4.5 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 9 inches

BLADE STEEL: 1095 with Hamon

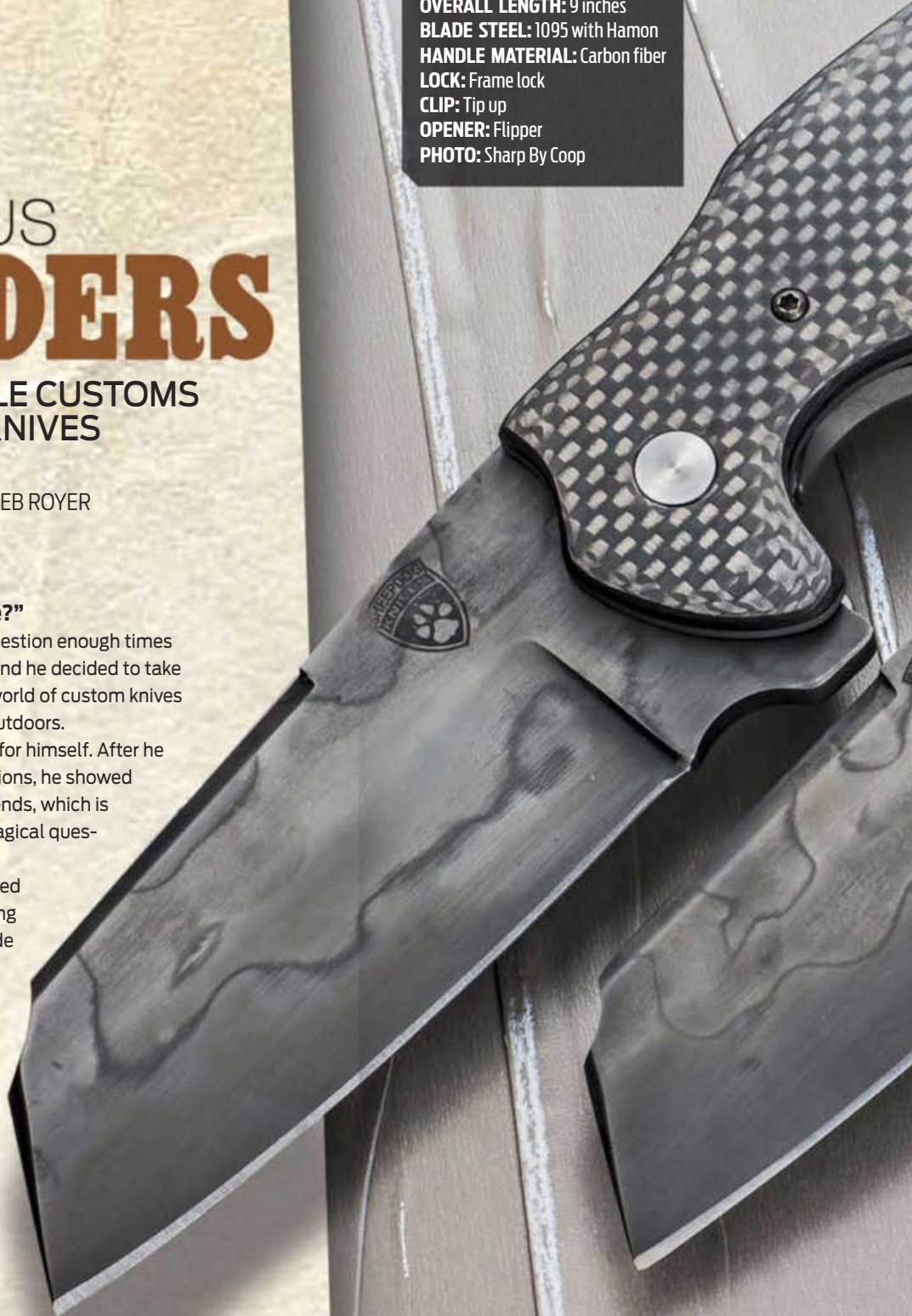
HANDLE MATERIAL: Carbon fiber

LOCK: Frame lock

CLIP: Tip up

OPENER: Flipper

PHOTO: Sharp By Coop





CO1C

BLADE LENGTH: 3.25 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 6.5 inches

BLADE STEEL: 1095

BOLSTER MATERIAL: Titanium

HANDLE MATERIAL: Thunderstorm Kevlar

LOCK: Frame lock

CLIP: Tip up

OPENER: Flipper

PHOTO: Sharp By Coop

CO1C MINI

BLADE LENGTH: 2.5 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 5 inches

BLADE STEEL: Chad Nichols San Mai Damascus

HANDLE MATERIAL: Timascus

LOCK: Frame lock

CLIP: Tip up

OPENER: Flipper

PHOTO: Sharp By Coop

**"... BY OFFERING A VALUE PRICE,
HE MAKES HIS KNIVES AVAILABLE TO
A LARGER SECTION OF THE CUSTOM-
KNIFE-BUYING PUBLIC."**

HOW THEY ARE MADE

While the influence of SBW can be seen in his knives, Chris has really come into his own developing his style of knives. He utilizes the stock removal method for constructing his knives.

"I take a sheet of steel and a sheet of titanium," he says. "I drill, cut and grind every bit of it that goes into my knives."

MATERIAL AND CONSTRUCTION

Chris's favorite steels to work with are 1095 and W2, due to the Hamons (temper lines) he creates in the steel. Additionally, he works with S35VN, CTS-XHP and occasionally Damascus.

For his scales he prefers G-10, carbon fiber or titanium. One scale option Chris offers is a thicker tita-



COIT

BLADE LENGTH: 3.25 inches
OVERALL LENGTH: 7.75 inches
BLADE STEEL: 1095 with Hamon
HANDLE MATERIAL: Carbon fiber
LOCK: Frame lock
CLIP: Tip up
OPENER: Flipper
PHOTO: Chuck Ward



KEY NUMBERS

- 450** In dollars, this is where his price range starts
- 12-16** In months, his delivery times

nium scale that is milled out to create an integral bolster. Then inserting something exotic like Timascus or superconductor — this technique makes it almost impossible to tell the bolster is integral without actually holding the knife.

He does, of course, offer the more standard titanium bolster or a zirconium for a

bolster. The majority of his folders feature a flipper opener with the caged bearings to enhance the smooth opening of the knife. He offers both frame locks and liner locks.

IMPRESSIONS

What has impressed me most about his work is twofold.

First, his knives have improved tremendously in a very short period of time. You can tell he takes his time and strives to get it right with every single knife. Continuous improvement is something I personally look for in every knife maker I follow.

Second, the variety of materials he works with is also significant. He doesn't shy away from what many would consider materials for more advanced makers. In-

HOW TO REACH HIM

EMAIL

Sheepdogknives@gmail.com

WEBSITE

www.SheepdogKnives.com

stead, he tackles the challenge head on. The result has been a wide variety of looks for his knives, so he can give you the custom look you want.

FINAL THOUGHTS

My favorite Chris Conaway knife is the CCF. Primarily because of the ergonomics



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CCF

BLADE LENGTH: 4 inches

OVERALL LENGTH: 9.5 inches

BLADE STEEL: N690

BOLSTER MATERIAL: Zirconium

HANDLE MATERIAL: Carbon fiber

LOCK: Frame

CLIP: Zirconium tip up

OPENER: Flipper

PHOTO: Caleb Royer

WHERE YOU'LL FIND HIM

Shows He Attends

- 1 The Blade Show in Atlanta, GA
- 2 The USN Show in Las Vegas, NV
- 3 The Gateway Knife Show in St. Louis, MI

"HE DOESN'T SHY AWAY FROM WHAT MANY WOULD CONSIDER MATERIALS FOR MORE ADVANCED MAKERS."

DID YOU KNOW?

Chris Conaway does take custom orders.

of the handle, this one fits my hand like a glove. Combined with value pricing that most new makers today don't seem to grasp or choose to ignore, Chris understands that by offering a value price he

makes his knives available to a larger section of the custom-knife-buying public.

As we continue to watch the prices for tactical folders spiral upward, seemingly out of control, it is always a pleasure to see a knife maker offering such a selection at a price point that most custom knife buyers can afford.

That journey is not so familiar in the knife world, but it isn't surprising that Chris Conaway is leading the way. **KI**

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Dental Style Picks



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
DP339	6 pc Dental Style Picks	9.44

Renaissance Wax



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
RW065	Renaissance Wax 2.3 oz	15.95
RW200	Renaissance Wax 7 oz	24.95

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Contains key chain blank, key ring, scratching tool, bottle of India ink, steel wool, carbon paper, tracing samples, applicator and instructions.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
TR101	Scrimshaw Kit	14.95

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CAT.#	COLOR	TYPE	PRICE
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HI44685	Blue	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44695	Green	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44705	Brown	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44112	Gray	Dye Based	3.75
HI44115	Russett	Dye Based	3.75
HI44100	White	Pigment Based	3.75
HI44201	India Ink	Pigment Based	3.75



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SC102	Hot Stuff Original	4 oz	24.59
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SC104	Super T Thick	2 oz	13.45
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SC106	Solvent Debonder	2 oz	10.95

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KI1403	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
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KI1423	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1023	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

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KI1422	1/4"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	14.95
KI1022	3/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	19.95

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KI1816	1/8"	Scale 1 1/2" x 10"	8.95
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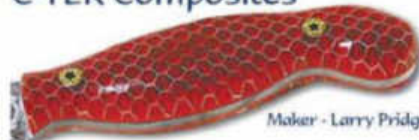
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CH486	Yellow	1/8"	13.95
CH487	Blue	1/8"	13.95

CAT.#	COLOR	THICKNESS	PRICE
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CH442	Orange	1/4"	15.95
CH443	Green	1/4"	15.95
CH444	Brown	1/4"	15.95
CH445	Clear	1/4"	15.95
CH446	Yellow	1/4"	15.95
CH447	Blue	1/4"	15.95

1/8" CELL

CAT.#	COLOR	THICKNESS	PRICE
CH881	Red	1/8"	13.95
CH882	Orange	1/8"	13.95
CH883	Green	1/8"	13.95
CH884	Brown	1/8"	13.95
CH885	Clear	1/8"	13.95
CH886	Yellow	1/8"	13.95
CH887	Blue	1/8"	13.95

CAT.#	COLOR	THICKNESS	PRICE
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CH842	Orange	1/4"	15.95
CH843	Green	1/4"	15.95
CH844	Brown	1/4"	15.95
CH845	Clear	1/4"	15.95
CH846	Yellow	1/4"	15.95
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"MICHAEL TOOK THE LEAP ABOUT 11 YEARS AGO AND STARTED SELLING KNIVES AT LOCAL GUN AND KNIFE SHOWS ..."

A close look at the work of Michael Morris.

Small City, Big Dreams

7 QUICK FACTS ABOUT MICHAEL MORRIS KNIVES

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON & PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MORRIS

THERE are probably more people getting into a subway car in Los Angeles right now than there are residents living in Yale, MI, but this is where you'll find Michael Morris, our new knifemaker of the month.

WHERE TO FIND HIM
www.MichaelMorrisKnives.com

1 HIS SHOP

Working out of his garage in the small town of Yale, Michigan (about 60 north of Detroit) you will find Michael Morris of Michael Morris Knives.

2 HOW IT STARTED

Having worked in a machine shop directly out of high school in 1980, Morris had the opportunity to witness an old-timer make a knife out of an old file. After making one for himself, Michael's hobby turned into a vocation.

3 KNIFE SHOWS

Starting out as a hit-and-miss hobby, Michael took the leap about 11 years ago and started selling knives at local gun and knife shows. In Michigan, you can't throw a rock without hitting a lake or a gun and knife show.

4 LIFE'S JOURNEY

While enjoying the nice second income, he was suddenly laid off from his machinist job, about six and a half years ago, and he made the decision to take his venture full time.

5 WORLDWIDE SUCCESS

Since then, Michael has gone from local Michigan gun and knife shows to his work being utilized in 26 countries on six continents.

6 INSPIRATION

Drawing his inspiration from some famous but also some unknown knife makers, Michael makes 100% of his knives from old American-made files and farrier rasps.

7 WHAT'S UNIQUE

Perhaps one of the most unique things about Michael Morris Knives is the truly custom, modular method he uses to provide custom knives to his clients. With many different blade profiles, styles and types in his catalog, combined with many varying handle scale materials, Michael lets his clients select the knife type (fixed or folder), blade profile and handle scale material to provide a custom knife that matches their personality best. **KI**

KEY NUMBERS

250 The average number of knives he has on order

20 The number of countries in which he has customers

9 In months, the length of the delivery time for his custom knives



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Handle: American Walnut Wood
Overall Length: 4-7/8"



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Blade: 2-3/8" 440 Stainless Steel
Handle: Green Stag Bone
Overall Length: 5-5/8"

700™ Series 19981

Model: R19981
Blade: 3-5/8" 440A Modified Stainless Steel
Handle: American Walnut Wood
Overall Length: 7-3/4"
With Leather Sheath



700™ Series 19980

Model: R19980
Blade: 3-3/4" 440A Modified Stainless Steel
Handle: American Walnut Wood
Overall Length: 8-1/4"
With Leather Sheath



700™ Series 19982

Model: R19982
Blade: 3-1/4" 440A Modified Stainless Steel
Handle: American Walnut Wood
Overall Length: 7-1/2"
With Leather Sheath



700™ Series 19989

Model: R19989
Blade: 7" 440A Modified Stainless Steel
Handle: American Walnut Wood
Overall Length: 11-1/2"
With Leather Sheath



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